

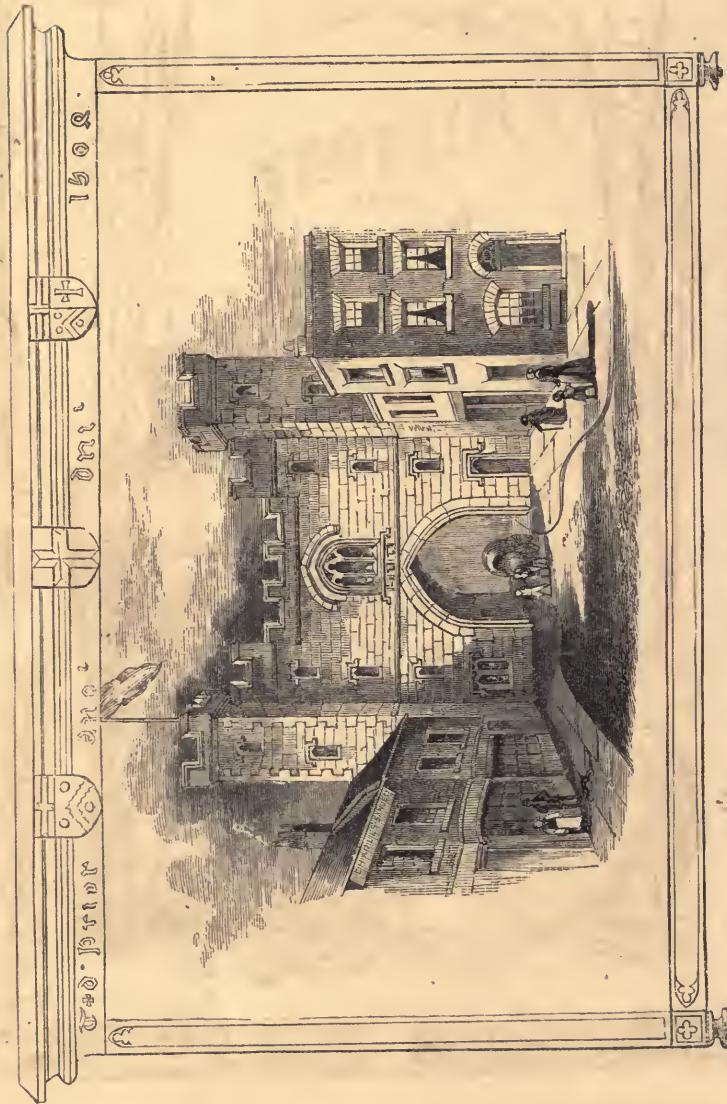
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Proposed Restoration of St. John's Gate South Front, by W. P. Griffith, Esq., F.S.A.

YE HISTORY
of ye
PRIORY
AND
GATE of S. JOHN
by
B. FOSTER
1851

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The Author, St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell.

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TO

WILLIAM PETIT GRIFFITH, ESQ., F.S.A.

SIR,

WITH feelings of respect I beg to dedicate the following pages to you, recognizing in yourself one, to whom the inhabitants of Clerkenwell are deeply indebted, for saving from positive defacement, if not from absolute removal, the Gate of the Priory of St. John, almost the only remnant of that once proud pile, of the history of which you know so much, and to whose kindness I am so deeply indebted, in permitting me to avail myself of your long and laboriously acquired knowledge.

I have the honour, Sir, to subscribe myself,

Your obedient servant,

BENJAMIN FOSTER.

ST. JOHN'S GATE,
December, 1851.

629707

“ For thou shalt fall ; and like the fierce dark age
That saw thee in thy strength, no more shalt be
Remember'd, save when mentioned in the page
Of brilliant fiction, or dim history ;
For 'tis the doom of all things—man, tower, tree—
To dwell their time on earth, and then decay ! ”

HERBERT.



PERHAPS there is no locality in England more replete with intense interest than Clerkenwell; almost every street is teeming with associations of a bygone time. But of all the monuments that remain to us in the district, none have more often been the subject of antiquarian inquiry than the old Gate of the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem. Since the Author's residence in it, frequent inquiries have been addressed to him for information relative to its history. He has, therefore, undertaken the present work with the view of affording, in a single volume, and at a moderate cost, such authentic particulars regarding it as he thinks will be found to be of general interest. The reader must be aware, that in a book of this kind mere compilation must be the principal groundwork. A clear and correct chronology, concisely arranged, of the most important events connected with the rise, progress, and fall of this interesting monastic establishment, will be found its greatest recommendation. Unused to the art of book-making, the Author has every thing to fear from the criticism it may be subject to; but something also to hope from the kindness wherewith some will doubtless regard it. If perseverance in research, and diligence in inquiry, be deemed

necessary qualifications in any one who undertakes a work of this kind, the Author trusts that the reader will give him credit for having exercised them in the present instance.

In committing this trifle to the press, the Author has spared neither expense nor trouble in its production. The artistic and typographical portion will attest their own excellence. He would take the present opportunity of thanking those who have so kindly assisted and encouraged his views. To the Rev. Dr. Hughes his thanks are due for the facilities afforded in examining the ancient Crypt and Church of St. John; to William Petit Griffith, Esq., he is much indebted for the information relative to the architecture and many statistics connected with his subject; and to William Rivington, Esq., for his critical revision and kind suggestions in the progress of the work through the press.

To conclude in the words of Dr. Johnson,—who has in modern times given a kind of classical interest to St. John's Gate,—“This has been a work of labour to me; but it has been a pleasant one. It has recalled to my recollection time and places long past and lost sight of, but never to be forgotten.”

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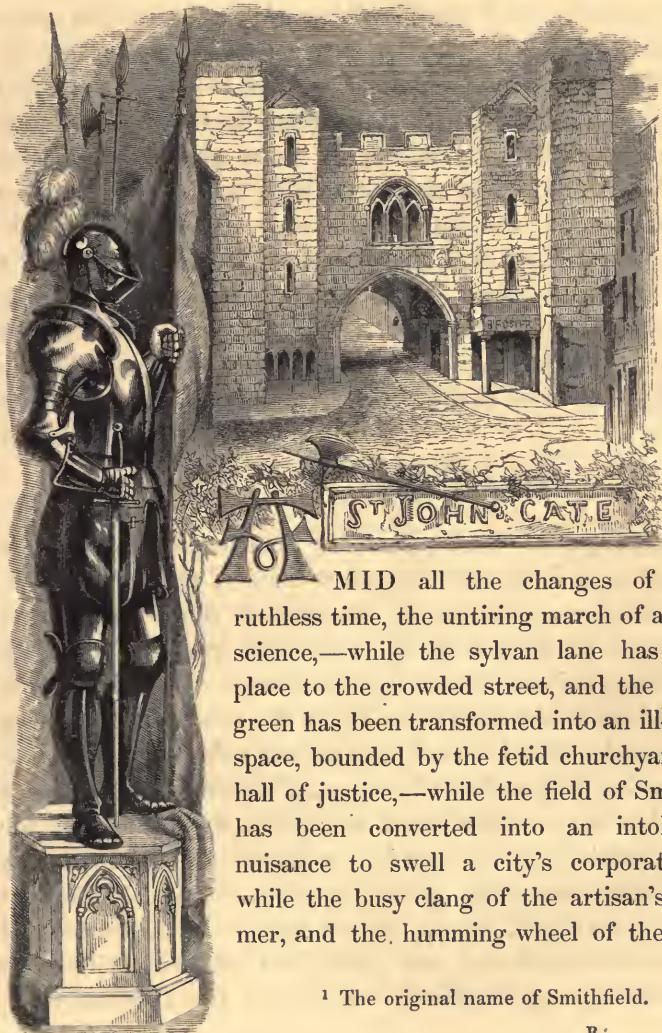
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Introduction.



MID all the changes of busy, ruthless time, the untiring march of art and science,—while the sylvan lane has given place to the crowded street, and the village green has been transformed into an ill-paved space, bounded by the fetid churchyard and hall of justice,—while the field of Smooth¹ has been converted into an intolerable nuisance to swell a city's corporation,—while the busy clang of the artisan's hammer, and the humming wheel of the inge-

¹ The original name of Smithfield.

nious mechanic have sounded and revolved in countless revolutions,—whilst martial glory has given place to mercantile greatness, and the cramp, cabined, and confined city of Elizabeth has flung its brachial extremities to distant villages, identifying them in one great whole,—while giant docks have swallowed up whole parishes, and forests of masts appear where once grew forest trees, where the tall chimney monopolizes the place of stately poplar and gothic spire, where the stagnant, black, and lately-covered ditch usurps the bed of what was once a fair and limpid stream,—amid all the changes, social, moral, political, and theological, still stands almost the only remnant of monastic architecture that once adorned the metropolis, the Grand South Gate of the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem in England.

“They dreamt not of a perishable home
Who thus could build.”

And although the forefinger of old time has left its indelible imprint on its front, and the modern hand of utilitarianism has adapted its resources to the conveniences of an hostelry, yet throughout all there is an air of venerable grandeur about the old portal; and one cannot look upon such a relic without being carried back to the age of chivalry, to the time when the waving pennon and polished corslet fluttered and reflected in the morning sun, inspiring notions of honour and deathless glory,—to the time when the courtyard would ring with the heavy tread of the mailed warrior, and the ponderous gate would creak upon its heavy hinges sluggishly opening to admit the proud prior, the chivalric cavalcade, or the ascetic monk,—when the religion of the time inculcated and practised a charity exhibited in the eleemosynary distribution of alms at the Hospital Gate,

—when the whole air of the neighbourhood was redolent of pious ejaculations and knightly vauntings,—when the warder on the topmost turret could look across the amphitheatric valley of London, and gaze on as many as fifty religious establishments within the boundary hills of Surrey, Kent, and Middlesex.

To the antiquarian, St. John's Gate possesses no mean attraction, outliving, as it has, the assaults of time, escaping the demolition consequent upon the Reformation, standing proudly erect while the devouring element swept across the devoted city, lighting up its battlemented turrets in bold relief,—when the charred and blackened beam, the burnt and smouldering ruin of the once fair city lay

“In one red burial blent,”—

when the choicest specimens of its ecclesiastical architecture were destroyed,—when the lately plague-spotted, but now panic-stricken and prostrate city sent forth fearful and imploring plaints to the skies;—even amid this frightful ravage and direful devastation stood the old Gate, looming giant-like in sullen majesty, made more impressive by the surrounding desolation. Time with its noiseless wheels rolled heavily along; the ruined city sprang phoenix-like from its ashes; the mighty genius of Wren again adorned it with the bright creation of his teeming and ever-fertile brain, the magnificent Cathedral shot with towering grandeur to the sky, asserting a dignity and assuming a presidency over a metropolis as yet the greatest the world e'er saw, our old Gate still maintained its rank amongst the public buildings; and now, the time when the connecting link in the

chain of historic, chivalric, and literary associations was forged and riveted by that leviathan of literature Dr. Samuel Johnson taking up his abode here, he who, bringing the whole artillery of his lexicographic art to bear, has reared a standard of diction to which the English must ever reverently bow. Here, too, poor Oliver Goldsmith, the simple-hearted child of nature,

“Who traversed realms alone,
And found no spot of earth to call his own,”

with the biographic Boswell, the imitable David Garrick, Savage, Cave, and all the distinguished literati of that period met. But, alas, for the degeneracy (or the necessities, we know not which) of the age! gin has usurped the place of genius; where crusaders met, cream of the valley is retailed; where romance flourished, rum is sold! and the once stalwart warder of the Gate has merged into the landlord of the tavern.

“To what base uses may we not return!”

We cannot regard such a building as a mere curiosity-seeker would, who, raising his eye and sagaciously shaking his head, flippantly observes, “Ah! they knew how to build in those days.” “Architecture,” Wren has observed, “has its political use. Public buildings being the ornament of a country, it establishes a nation, draws people and commerce, makes the people love their native country, which passion is the origin of all great actions in a commonwealth.”

Although our Gate cannot perhaps be regarded as a choice specimen of architecture, yet it is sufficient to show at once

the purpose, intent, and feelings of our rude ancestors, its sheer strength indicating vigour and energy of character. Its present appearance, although much neutralized by the smaller buildings clustering around its base, sufficiently attests the nature of those men who were once its lords and masters; and although they were, as a body, frequently guided by crafty men, who governed them by terror or by delusion, yet these enduring monuments show the existence of some great and powerful impulse, which led the people to achieve mighty things. There was a higher principle at work amongst them, however abused and perverted, than that of individual selfishness. The social principle was built upon some sort of reverence engendered by the then surrounding institutions of the country.

The great political struggle and social turmoil which a country must encounter, emerging from barbarism into feudalism, and from thence to a greater freedom of action and fuller liberty of thought, must be evident. Institutions and laws bend and become subservient to the exigencies of the time, and adapt themselves to the wants, wishes, and feelings of modern society;—not so the edifices wherein such institutions were founded, and such laws dispensed,—they still remain intact, giving proof of the tastes and impulses that then guided men; and fully prove that, whatever time may have elapsed and changes have transpired, there is yet enough in modern civilization to preserve a strong identity of men of the past with those of the present day. We are now learning to respect the great and important lessons inculcated by the contemplation of the remnants of buildings such as these: civil and religious liberty

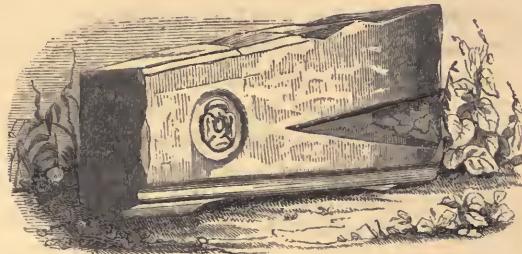
having advanced so rapidly within the last few years, we can now look upon objects of a bygone time, and attach just as much value to them as antiquarians may, viewed as they now are, not with the false fanatical feeling of overbearing zealots, but with the calm dispassionate spirit of reasonable men, regarding and cherishing the good they once possessed, and carefully avoiding the vices of which they were the victims. It was from viewing our religious establishments through a distorted and bigoted medium, that the noblest ecclesiastical structures were plundered and defaced. Aided by the rabble, who always regard with a feeling of hostile superstition those prodigious edifices, whose magnificence amazes and whose grandeur awes them, and by the soldiery, whose habits of indiscriminate ravage were exasperated by Puritan animosity, the coarse zealots, to whom the work of destruction was entrusted, set about their task in delighted earnest. Cromwell, at Peterborough, in pursuance of “the thorough Reformation,” set the example of desecrating the cathedral. At Canterbury, the soldiers and people overthrew the communion-table, tore the velvet covering; violated the monuments of the dead; broke down the rarest windows in Christendom; destroyed the organ, the ancient woodwork, and the brazen eagle which supported the Bible; tore up or took away the service-books and vestments, and strewed the pavement with fragments. Observing in the arras-hangings of the choir some figures of the Saviour, they drew their daggers, and, with many oaths and execrations, pierced them through and through. A statue of the same, in a niche of the exterior, was exposed to similar outrage: they discharged their muskets at it, “triumphing much” when the shot took effect upon the head and face of the figures. Still worse enormities are re-

ported to have occurred during the occupation of Lichfield by the profligate followers of Sir John Gell. The carvings, the rich windows, the curious pavements, the costly tombs, the records belonging to the close and city, were all destroyed or mutilated. In Scotland also, the impetuous John Knox is reported to have fired some of the abbey buildings with his own hand, exclaiming, that "to destroy the rooks, you must burn down the rookery."

" Through the arch'd beauty of the sculptured porch,
Into the calm and consecrated church,
See where they come, with loud, unholie feet,
The soldier ruffians, and the impious cheat !
No more soft movement from the tranquil throng,
Who erst to peace and worship pass'd along !
No more sweet echoes, floating far and dim,
From the full choir and organ-chanted hymn !
Fierce wrangling oaths the starfled air receives,
And, lo ! God's temple is a den of thieves !"

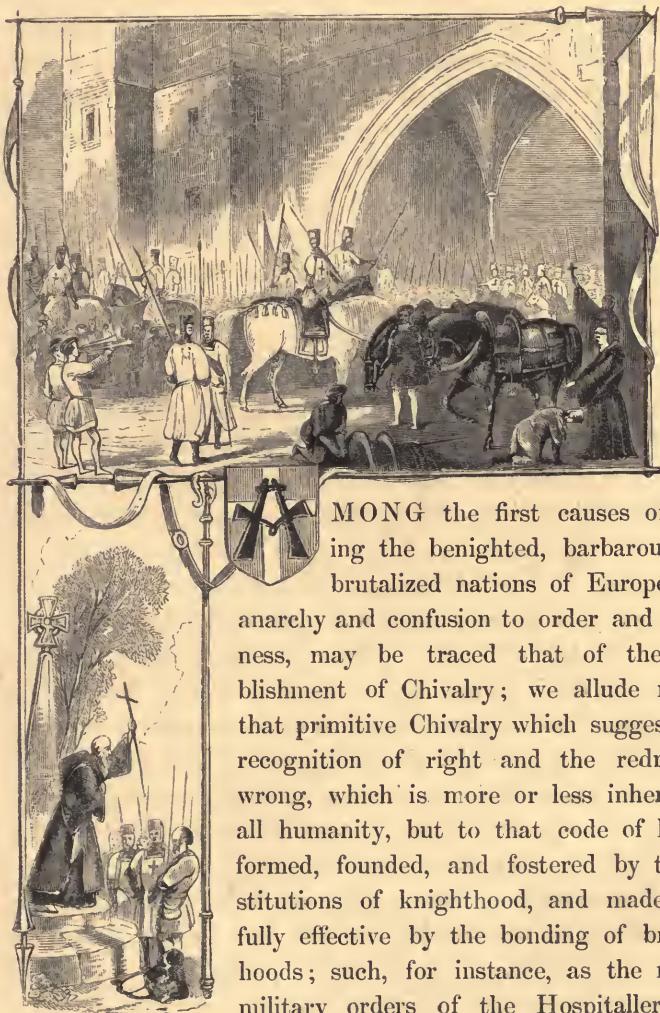
We cannot leave this subject without calling the attention of our readers to the old Priory Gate of St. John, one of the important landmarks in the history of our country. "Such are the antiquities of a great nation : worm-eaten and full of canker-holes though they be; yet are they teeming with life, and will be fresh and beautiful as long as civilization endures :—such is the effect upon every generous mind. The study of the 'ancient records' of our native land, the richest treasures that we have derived from a long line of ancestors, are our antiquities: they carry us back to dim periods that have bequeathed to us no written explanations of the origin and the uses of their indestructible monuments. Vast mounds,

gigantic temples, mystic towers, belong to ages—not of barbarism, but of civilization,—different from our own. These remnants of History which have casually escaped the shipwreck of time (so Bacon defines antiquities), are among the best riches of the freight of knowledge; not merely curiosities, but of intrinsic worth."



Stone discovered by Benjamin Foster, in vault east side of Gate.

Chapter II.



MONG the first causes of raising the benighted, barbarous, and brutalized nations of Europe from anarchy and confusion to order and politeness, may be traced that of the establishment of Chivalry; we allude not to that primitive Chivalry which suggests the recognition of right and the redress of wrong, which is more or less inherent in all humanity, but to that code of honour formed, founded, and fostered by the institutions of knighthood, and made more fully effective by the bonding of brotherhoods; such, for instance, as the religio-military orders of the Hospitallers, the

Templars, and the Teutonic Knights¹, all of which owed their origin to the Crusades, and evinced by their organization a faithful characteristic reflex of the then state of society. It has been asserted that the Crusades did not originate in Chivalry: we have scarcely the hardihood to contradict the proposition; but they certainly were twin-born—they commenced in the same century, and undoubtedly drew their origin from the same source. If one was not the cause of the other, they were evidently the effects of the same cause. The first Crusade—the most important of them, and which may be considered to have given a tone and character to all the succeeding ones,—does not present a single vestige of what is usually understood by the term Chivalry, not a trace of what the imagination rather than the knowledge of Burke describes as embodying “the generous loyalty to rank and sex, the proud submission, the dignified obedience, and that subordination of the heart which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom; that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness.” Valour, humanity, courtesy, justice, honour, were the characteristics of Chivalry; and to these were added religion, which, by infusing a large portion of enthusiastic zeal, carried them all to a romantic excess, wonderfully suited to the genius of the age, and productive of the greatest and most permanent effects both upon policy and manners. War was carried on with less ferocity, when hu-

¹ The Teutonic order founded A. D. 1190 in Palestine, and at first called Knights of the Virgin Mary. They must be all Germans.

manity, no less than courage, came to be deemed the ornament of knighthood, and knighthood a distinction superior to royalty, and an honour which princes were proud to receive from the hands of private gentlemen²; more gentle and polished manners were introduced, when courtesy was recommended as the most amiable of knightly virtues, and every knight devoted himself to the service of some lady; and violence and oppression decreased, when it was accounted meritorious to check and to punish them. A scrupulous adherence to truth, with the most religious atten-

² The young warrior was armed for the first time with certain ceremonies proper to inspire martial ardour; the previous discipline and solemnities of initiation were many and singular. The novice in chivalry was educated in the house of some knight, commonly a person of high rank, whom he served first in the character of page, and afterwards of squire; nor was he admitted to the supreme honour of knighthood until he had given many striking proofs of his valour and address. The ceremony of initiation was very solemn. Severe fastings, and nights spent in a church or chapel in prayer and confession of sins, and the receiving of the sacrament with devotion, bathing and putting on white robes, as emblems of that purity of manners required by the laws of chivalry, were necessary preparations for this ceremony. When the candidate for knighthood had gone through all these and other introductory formalities, he fell at the feet of the person from whom he expected that honour, and on his knees delivered to him his sword. After answering suitable questions, the usual oath was administered to him, namely, to serve his prince, defend the faith, protect the persons and reputations of virtuous ladies, and to rescue, at the hazard of his life, widows, orphans, and all unhappy persons groaning under injustice or oppression. Then the knights and ladies, who assisted at the ceremony, adorned the candidate with the armour and ensigns of chivalry, beginning with putting on the spurs, and ending with girding him with the sword. Seeing him thus accoutréed, the king, or nobleman, who was to confer the honour of knighthood, gave him the accolade, or dubbing, by three gentle strokes with the flat part of the sword on the shoulder, or with the palm of his hand on the neck, saying, "In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I make thee a knight! be thou loyal, brave, and hardy."—*Mém. sur l'Ancienne Chevalerie, par M. de la Carne de St. Palaye.*

tion to fulfil every engagement,—but particularly those between the sexes, as more easily violated,—became the distinguishing character of a gentleman; because Chivalry was regarded as the school of honour, and inculcated the most delicate sensibility with respect to that point. And valour, seconded by so many motives of love, religion, and virtue, became altogether irresistible. That the spirit of Chivalry often rose to an extravagant height, and had sometimes a pernicious tendency, must, however, be allowed. In Spain, under the influence of a romantic gallantry, it gave birth to a series of wild adventures, which have been deservedly ridiculed; in the train of Norman ambition, it extinguished the liberties of England, and deluged Italy in blood; and, as the engine of papal power, desolated Asia, under the banner of the Cross. But these violences, resulting from accidental circumstances, ought not to be considered as arguments against an institution laudable in itself, and necessary at the time of its establishment. And they who pretend to despise it—the advocates of ancient barbarism and ancient rusticity—ought to remember, that Chivalry not only first taught mankind to carry the civilities of peace into the operations of war, and to mingle politeness with the use of the sword, but roused the human soul from its lethargy, invigorating the human character even while it softened it, and produced exploits which antiquity cannot parallel. Nor ought they to forget, that it gave variety and elegance, and communicated an increase of pleasure to the intercourse of life, by making woman a more essential part of society; and is therefore entitled to our gratitude, though the point of honour and the refinements in gallantry—its more doubtful effects—should be excluded from the improvements in modern manners. But the beneficial effects

of Chivalry were strongly counteracted by other institutions of a less social kind. Some persons of both sexes, of most religions and countries, have in all ages secluded themselves from the world, in order to acquire a reputation for superior sanctity, or to indulge a melancholy turn of mind, affecting to hold converse only with the Divinity. The number of these solitary devotees, however, in ancient times, was few; and the spirit of religious seclusion, among the heathen, was confined chiefly to high southern latitudes, where the heat of the climate favours the indolence of the cloister. But the case has been very different in more modern ages; for although the monastic life had its origin among the Christians in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, it rapidly spread not only over the whole of Asia and Africa, but also over Europe, and penetrated to the most remote corners of the North and West, almost at the same time that it reached the extremities of the East and South, to the great hurt of population and industry, and the obstruction of the natural progress of society.

We trust we may be excused for thus enlarging upon a matter that may appear somewhat foreign to our prefaced purpose; but seeing that the establishment of which we are about to speak was reared by men who imbibed so largely the principles involved in ancient Chivalry, it may not be deemed irrelevant in thus introducing our subject, and in attempting to describe even the most insignificant minutiae of their once proud pile. We think we are none the less qualified for the task by taking a cursory glance of that system of which these men formed so prominent a part; and of that fanatical movement which brought into existence bodies of men, who, however

humble in their origin, yet attained a position and wielded a power to which the Church itself crouched, and which even royalty readily respected. The greatest moral movements that have taken place, the bloodiest revolutions that have ever been effected, the mightiest thought of the profoundest philosophy, the acknowledged truism of the purest ethics, or the most sanguinary edicts of wicked tyrannies,—have frequently sprung from, and been brought about by, the most insignificant of men. So the first Crusade, undertaken with the design of rescuing the Holy Land from the infidel, was moved by a mendicant monk, urged with all the ardour that religious fanaticism alone could use, and enforced by an almost apparent superhuman agency. The Crusades (the first at least) were like the creature who projected them—wholly irrational; sound reason was the quality of all others the least estimated; and the chivalric valour, which both the age and the enterprise demanded, was considered debased if mingled with the least touch of discretion. Indeed, so wild, visionary, and improvident were the first attempts to rescue the holy sepulchre, that none, save the blind enthusiast or the infatuated fatalist, could have shared in so great an absurdity. It may be as well to notice the state of society in the East at that time, and the passion for pilgrimage which then prevailed in Europe. Those places that are endeared to our memories by any transaction of magnitude, those spots that are revered from having been the birthplace or residence of our greatest and noblest,—we naturally regard with veneration and delight. Hence the enthusiasm with which our *literati* still view the ruins of Athens and Rome; hence the feeling with which we proudly visit the shrines of our native land—be it the soft-flowing Avon, where our gentle Shakspeare lisped in tuneful

numbers ; or the modest dwelling in Artillery-walk, where the sublime imaginings of glorious John Milton produced his Paradise, or pictured his Pandemonium ; or excursionize we to Rydal Mount, and listen to the “ wood-notes wild ” of Wordsworth ; or glance we at the humble cottage at Sloperton, where the Bard of Erin³ now lies insensible to his own soft strain, and whose harp, all unattuned, no more sweet music can discourse ; or turn we north of the Tweed, and every spot is identified with an interest that a Scott alone could give, or the poetry of a Burns perpetuate. If such feelings now possess us, if such sympathies are now enlisted, can we be surprised at the superstitious devotion with which Christians, from the earliest ages of the Church, were accustomed to visit that country where their religion had taken its rise, and that city in which the Messiah had died for the redemption of those who believe in His Name ? Pilgrimages to the shrines of saints and martyrs were also common : but as this distant pilgrimage could not be performed without considerable expense, fatigue, and danger, it appeared more meritorious than all others, and came to be considered as an expiation for almost every crime ; and an opinion which prevailed over Europe towards the close of the tenth, and the beginning of the eleventh century, increased the number and the ardour of the credulous devotees that undertook this tedious journey. The thousand years mentioned by St. John in his Book of Revelation were supposed to be accomplished, and the end of the world at hand. A general consternation seized the minds of Christians. Many relinquished their possessions, abandoned their friends and families, and hurried with precipita-

³ The author is informed that Thomas Moore, the Irish poet, lies bedridden and all but unconscious, at this time.

tion to the Holy Land, where they imagined Christ would suddenly appear to judge the quick and the dead. But the Christians, although ultimately undeceived in regard to the day of judgment, had the mortification, in these pious journeys, to see the holy sepulchre, and the other places made sacred by the presence of the Saviour, fallen into the hands of infidels. The followers and the countrymen of Mahomet had early made themselves masters of Palestine, which the Greek empire, far in its decline, was unable to protect against so warlike an enemy. They gave little disturbance, however, to those zealous pilgrims who daily flocked to Jerusalem ; nay, they allowed every one, after paying a moderate tribute, to visit the holy sepulchre, to perform his religious duties, and return in peace ; but the Turks—a Tartar tribe who had also embraced Mahometanism—having wrested Syria from the Saracens about the middle of the eleventh century, and made themselves masters of Jerusalem, pilgrims were thenceforth exposed to outrages of every kind from these fierce barbarians. And this change, coinciding with the panic of the consummation of all things, and the supposed appearance of Christ on Mount Sion, filled Europe with alarm and indignation. Every pilgrim who returned from Palestine, related the dangers he had encountered in visiting the holy city ; and described, with exaggeration, the cruelty and vexations of the Turks, who, to use the language of those zealots, not only profaned the sepulchre of the Lord by their presence, but derided the sacred mysteries in the very place of their completion, and where the Son of God was speedily expected to hold His great tribunal. While the minds of men were thus roused, a fanatical monk, commonly known by the name of Peter the Hermit, a native of Amiens, in Picardy, revived the project of Gregory

VII., of leading all the forces of Christendom against the infidels, and of driving them out of the Holy Land. He had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and was so deeply affected with the danger to which that act of piety exposed Christians, that he ran from province to province, on his return, with a crucifix in his hand, exciting princes and people to this holy war ; and wherever he came, he kindled the same enthusiastic ardour for it with which he himself was animated. Urban II., who had at first been doubtful of the success of such a project, at length entered into Peter's views, and summoned at Placentia a council, which was obliged to be held in the open fields, no hall being sufficient to contain the multitude. It consisted of four thousand ecclesiastics, and thirty thousand laymen, who all declared for the war against the infidels ; but none of them heartily engaged in the enterprise. Urban therefore found it necessary to call another council the same year at Clermont, in Auvergne, where the greatest prelates, nobles, and princes attended ; and when the pope and the hermit had concluded their pathetic exhortations, the whole assembly, as if impelled by an immediate inspiration, exclaimed with one voice, “It is the will of God !—it is the will of God !”—words which were deemed so memorable, and believed to be so much the result of a Divine influence, that they were employed as the motto on the sacred standard, and as the signal of rendezvous and battle, in all the future exploits of the champions of the *Cross*—the symbol chosen by the devoted combatants, in allusion to the death of Christ, as the badge of union, and affixed to their right shoulder : hence their expedition received the name of a crusade⁴. Persons of all ranks flew

⁴ Theod. Ruinart. in Vit. Urbani II. Baron. Annal. Eccles. tom. xi.

to arms with the utmost ardour. Not only the gallant nobles of that age, with their martial followers, whom the boldness of a romantic enterprise might have been apt to allure, but men in the more humble and pacific stations of life, ecclesiastics of every order, and even women, concealing their sex beneath the disguise of armour, engaged with emulation in an undertaking which was deemed so sacred and meritorious. The greatest criminals were forward in a service which they regarded as a propitiation for all their crimes. If they succeeded, they hoped to make their fortune in this world; and if they died, they were promised a crown of glory in the world to come. Devotion, passion, prejudice, and habit, all contributed to the same end; and the combination of so many causes produced that wonderful emigration, which made the Princess Anna Comnena say, “that Europe, loosened from its foundations, and impelled by its moving principle, seemed in one united body to precipitate itself upon Asia⁵. ” The number of adventurers soon became so great, that their more experienced leaders—Hugh, Count of Vermandois, brother to the French king; Robert, Duke of Normandy; Raymond, Count of Thoulouse; Godfrey of Bouillon, Prince of Brabant; and Stephen, Count of Blois—grew apprehensive that the greatness of the armament would defeat its purpose. They therefore permitted an undisciplined multitude, computed at three hundred thousand men, to go before them, under the command of Peter the Hermit, Walter the Moneyless, and other wild fanatics. Peter and his army—before which he walked with sandals on his feet, a rope about his waist, and every other mark of monkish austerity—took the road to Constantinople

⁵ Alexias, lib. x.

through Hungary and Bulgaria. Godescald, a German priest, and his banditti took the same route ; and trusting that Heaven by supernatural means would supply all their necessities, they made no provision for subsistence on their march ; but they soon found themselves obliged to obtain by plunder what they had vainly expected from miracles. Want is ingenious in suggesting pretences for its supply. Their fury first discharged itself upon the Jews. As the soldiers of Christ, they thought themselves authorized to take vengeance upon his murderers ; they accordingly fell upon those unhappy people, and put to the sword, without mercy, such as would not submit to baptism, seizing their effects as lawful prize. In Bavaria alone twelve thousand Jews were massacred, and many thousands in the other provinces of Germany. But Jews not being every where to be found, these pious robbers, who had tasted the sweets of plunder, and were under no military regulations, pillaged without distinction, until the inhabitants of the countries through which they passed rose and cut them almost all off. The Hermit, however, and the remnant of his army, consisting of twenty thousand starving wretches, at length reached Constantinople, where he received a fresh supply of German and Italian vagabonds, who were guilty of the greatest disorders, pillaging even the churches⁶. Alexis Comnenus, the Greek emperor, who had applied to the Latins for succour against the Turks, entertained a hope, and but a feeble one, of obtaining such an aid as might enable him to repulse the enemy. He was, therefore, astonished to see his dominions overwhelmed by an inundation of licentious barbarians, strangers alike to order and discipline ; and to hear

⁶ Maimbourg, Hist. des Croisades, tom. i.

of the multitudes that were following under different leaders. He contented himself, however, with getting rid as soon as possible of such troublesome guests, by furnishing them with vessels to transport themselves to the other side of the Bosphorus; and general Peter soon saw himself in the plains of Asia, at the head of a Christian army, ready to give battle to the infidels. Soliman, sultan of Nice, fell upon the disorderly crowd, and slaughtered them almost without resistance. Walter the Moneyless and many other leaders of equal distinction were slain; but Peter the Hermit found his way back to Constantinople, where he was considered as a maniac, who had enlisted a multitude of madmen to follow him⁷. Such was the fate of the first Crusade; although varied success attended the after efforts of Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, whose soldiers, in connexion with those of the other leaders of the Crusade, amounted, when mustered on the banks of the Bosphorus, to the incredible number of one hundred thousand horsemen and six hundred thousand foot. Had they been united under one head, or been commanded by leaders who observed any concert in their operations, they were enough to have conquered all Asia. But these pious adventurers became much diminished by the detachments they made and the disasters they suffered; and when they arrived before Jerusalem, they did not exceed, according to the testimony of most historians, twenty thousand foot, and fifteen hundred horse; while the garrison of Jerusalem consisted of forty thousand men. Mean as the besieging army might have been numerically, they were not the men to turn back: they had seen

⁷ Anna Comnena, *ubi sup.*

Jerusalem ; they had sworn to rescue the fair plain of Palestine from the pagan.

It was a lovely morning in the summer of 1099 when this gallant and devoted band, consisting of warriors, priests, women, and children, were recompensed for all their toil by a sight of Jerusalem ! They had passed Emmaus,—that place of sacred association,—when the Holy City burst upon their view, revealing itself at once and golden in the swift rising sun of the East. The name *Jerusalem!* escaped from every lip : some knelt and prayed, some threw themselves prostrate and kissed the earth, some gazed and trembled,—all had “much ado,” says the quaint and emphatic Fuller, “to manage so great a gladness.”

The siege of Jerusalem commenced on the 7th of June, 1099 ; and on the 15th day of July the banner of the Cross floated on the walls. The renowned Godfrey of Bouillon was the first who sprang into the breach, and eight days after he was elected king of Jerusalem. The garrison and inhabitants were put to the sword without distinction : arms protected not the brave, nor submission the timid. No age or sex was spared : infants perished by the same sword that pierced their mothers while imploring mercy. The streets of Jerusalem were covered with heaps of slain, and the shrieks of agony or despair still resounded from every house, when these triumphant warriors, glutted with slaughter, threw aside

⁸ By no writer have the effects of the Crusades, their design and influence on modern civilization, been more beautifully explained than by M. Guizot, in his admirable “Lectures on European Civilization.”

their arms, yet streaming with blood, and advanced with naked feet and bended knees to the sepulchre of the Prince of Peace; sung anthems to that Redeemer who had purchased their salvation by his death; and, while dead to the calamities of their fellow-creatures, dissolved in tears for the sufferings of the Messiah!

“ Lo, steel-clad War his gorgeous standard rears!
The red-cross squadrons madly rage,
And mow through infancy and age;
Then kiss the sacred dust, and melt in tears.”

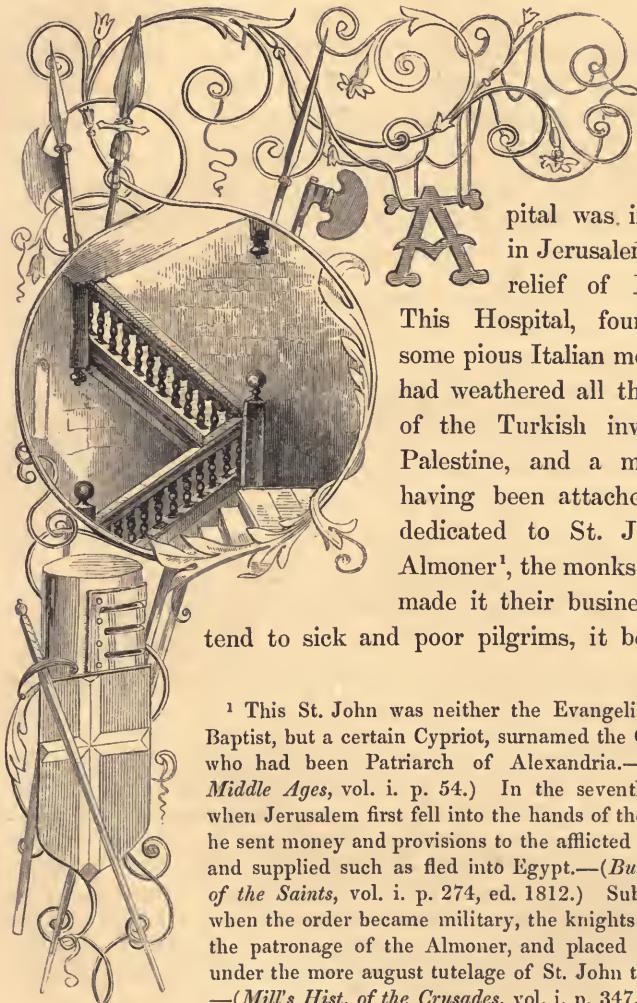
So inconsistent is human nature with itself, and so easily, as the philosophic Hume remarks, does the most effeminate superstition associate both with the most heroic courage and with the fiercest barbarity.

There were in the whole seven Crusades, commencing in the year 1096, and terminating in 1291; yet these romantic expeditions, though barbarous and destructive in themselves, were followed by many important consequences, equally conducive to the welfare of the community and of the individual.



Spandrel of Door-case, entrance to West Tower, St. John's Gate.

Chapter XII.



S early as the year 1048 an Hospital was instituted in Jerusalem for the relief of Pilgrims. This Hospital, founded by some pious Italian merchants, had weathered all the storms of the Turkish invasion of Palestine, and a monastery having been attached to it, dedicated to St. John the Almoner¹, the monks of which made it their business to attend to sick and poor pilgrims, it became in

¹ This St. John was neither the Evangelist nor the Baptist, but a certain Cypriot, surnamed the Charitable, who had been Patriarch of Alexandria.—(*Hallam's Middle Ages*, vol. i. p. 54.) In the seventh century, when Jerusalem first fell into the hands of the Saracens, he sent money and provisions to the afflicted Christians, and supplied such as fled into Egypt.—(*Butler's Lives of the Saints*, vol. i. p. 274, ed. 1812.) Subsequently, when the order became military, the knights renounced the patronage of the Almoner, and placed themselves under the more august tutelage of St. John the Baptist.—(*Mill's Hist. of the Crusades*, vol. i. p. 347.)

these troubled times a most valuable institution for the Christians who visited Jerusalem. On the advance of the crusading army, the monks of St. John, along with the principal Christians of the place, were thrown into prison. Released by the conquerors after the capture of Jerusalem, the good monks made themselves conspicuous by their kind offices to the wounded Crusaders : in gratitude for their pious services, endowments and immunities were conferred on them by Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lorraine. The Hospital of Jerusalem became rich and famous, and monastic institutions bearing their name were founded in various cities of Europe. On the death of their abbot,—Gerrard, a Frenchman,—in 1118, Raymond du Pay, a crusader, who had been wounded at the siege of Jerusalem, and had experienced the benefits of the Hospital, was chosen his successor. Raymond, combining his old profession of a soldier with his new duties as head of an ecclesiastical corporation, conceived the idea of changing the Monks Hospitallers into a military body ; the order of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John was accordingly founded ; the declared objects of the institution being to make war upon the infidels, and to afford relief and comfort to the pilgrims to the Holy City². Under these auspices arose the order of "Hospitallers, or Brothers of St. John of Jerusalem." They

² The origin of the Knights Templars was not very dissimilar : even after the conquest of Palestine by the Crusaders, pilgrims from Europe were frequently plundered and robbed by the Turks on their way to Jerusalem. To defend travellers from the attacks of these roving bands of infidels, some French knights, who had taken part in the first Crusade, formed an association of a religious character, abjuring worldly possessions, vowing implicit obedience to their elected chief, and renouncing every end of life, except the defence of the Christian Faith against the infidel. The nine knights who were the first members of the association had quarters assigned them near the Temple at Jerusalem, hence the name of the order.

assumed as their dress a long, black, coarse mantle or shirt, with a white cross on the breast. Their humility was of the deepest kind: the poor and rich they recognized as lords and masters; to them they were liberal and compassionate in the extreme, while to themselves they were rigid and austere: the finest flour went to compose the food which they gave to the poor; what remained after they were satisfied, mingled with clay, was the repast of the monks. As long as the brotherhood were poor, they retained their humility; but wealth began to flow in upon them. Duke Godfrey, enamoured of their virtue, bestowed on them his lordship of Montboire, in Brabant, with all its appurtenances; and his brother and successor, Baldwin, gave them a share of all the booty taken from the infidels. These examples were followed by other Christian princes; so that within the space of a very few years, the Hospital of St. John was in possession of numerous manors both in the East and in Europe, which were placed under the management of members of their society; a total remission of all burthens to which they had been subjected was granted them; and they found no difficulty in obtaining all they required. Permission was given them to elect their own head without the interference of any temporal or spiritual power whatever; they were freed from the obligation of paying tithes to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and confirmed in all the donations made or to be made to them. The Brotherhood of the Hospital was now greatly advanced in consideration, and reckoned among its members many gallant knights, who laid aside their arms and devoted themselves to the humble office of ministering to the sick and needy. The clergy and laity were admitted members of the Order, and both were alike bound to yield the most implicit obedience to the commands of

their superior. It is evident the society did not for some time assume its military character ; but in all probability the vast renown acquired by the Templars for their valiant and meritorious conduct, principally induced the Hospitallers to associate with their hitherto monastic character that of the military ; they were also prompted to this step by the strong bias given by the soldier-like qualities of their first Master, Raymond du Pay, who, upon his early connexion with the society, was recognized by the simple title of Director (Procurator) of the Hospital ; and it was not till some time after that he assumed the title of Grand Master : such change, no doubt, was found necessary, as the especial duty of the Grand Master was to lead the troops into battle. Brompton, the English historian, who wrote in the twelfth century, asserts that “the founders of the Order of the Templars had originally been members of that of St. John :” most likely such was the case, as we find that the Templars were not known as a society till seventy years after the Hospitallers had been established. At all times the tendance of the poor and sick formed a part of the duties of the Brethren of the Hospital ; and this was always a marked distinction between them and the rival Order of the Temple, whose only task was that of fighting against the infidels. During the first nine years that elapsed after the institution of their Order, the Knights of the Temple lived in poverty, religiously devoting all the money which was sent to them from Europe to the advantage of the Holy Land and the service of pilgrims. They had no peculiar habit³ ; their raiment was such as the charity of the

³ It was afterwards appointed that a white mantle should be the distinguishing dress of the Brothers of the Temple ; and such it remained till the pontificate of Pope Eugenius III., who, in 1146, added a red cross, to be worn at

faithful bestowed upon them; and although knights, and constantly engaged in warfare against the infidels, their poverty and moderation were such, that Hugh des Payens and his companion Godfrey of St. Omer had but one war-horse between them—a circumstance which they afterwards in their brilliant period commemorated by their seal, which represents two knights mounted on one horse; a device chosen, as well as their pious inscription,—“Non nobis, Domine! non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam!” (Not to us, O Lord! not to us, but to Thy Name give the glory!)—with the view of inculcating humility on the Brethren, now beginning to wax haughty and insolent. The military annals of no country or time exhibit deeds that can surpass, few even that can rival, the prodigies of valour continually performed by these warrior monks; but with wealth corruption as usual flowed in. The one Order possessed nine thousand manors, and the other (the Hospitallers of St. John) nineteen thousand, in the fairest provinces of Christendom: it would be too much to expect that humility would long continue to characterize either. The first evidence of the evil spirit that was at work in their hearts, was exhibited in their mutual quarrels, which at last grew to such a height, that they actually turned their arms against each other; and on one occasion, in 1259, fought a pitched battle, in which the Knights Hospitallers were the conquerors, and scarcely left a Templar alive to carry to his brethren the intelligence of their discomfiture. It is true, the rival bodies made common cause occasionally for mutual purposes; yet it is evident the feeling most prevalent with them

the breast, as a symbol of the martyrdom to which they stood constantly exposed. The cross worn on the black mantles of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John was, as we have stated, white.

was that of the greatest jealousy and envy. The indulgence in such vicious propensities brought its usual consequences; namely, disunity, and, consequently, want of strength; for after all their prowess and great valour, the dearly-purchased city of Jerusalem was wrested from them after an eighty-seven years' possession, and the crescent once more unfurled itself, and floated over the sacred banner of the Cross. The Hospital-lers still retained their arms, and highly distinguished themselves in the year 1191 by taking, after a desperate siege, the city of Ptolemais⁴, which afforded them a last residence in the sacred territory; for, after nearly two hundred years' occupancy, the whole was wrested from Christian dominion in 1292⁵. The Master and Brethren of the Hospital then fled to the island of Cyprus for safety. The monarch of that place, out of compassion, allowed them the seaport of Limisson to reside in. Humbled as they were by their recent discomfiture, their enthusiasm of fighting for the Cross deserted them for a time, and turning their attention to the more internal arrangements of the Order, they enacted several necessary and salutary alterations.

⁴ Acca (or, as the Franks call it, Acra, or Acre) was anciently called Acc, or Accho, then Ptolemais, and afterwards St. John d'Acre, while it was in the possession of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem.

⁵ Many of the inhabitants had previously retired to the island of Cyprus: those who remained behind were massacred by the infidels, and reduced to the most deplorable state. The following singular circumstance is recorded on the occasion. A noble abbess, fearing that herself and her nuns might suffer violation from the brutality of the conquerors, proposed to her flock to cut and mangle their faces, that by the destruction of their beauty they might preserve their purity. To this she not only excited them by words, but by her own example, which they immediately imitated. The Turks, finding them such spectacles of horror, instead of the beauties they expected, cruelly put them to the sword. Thus fell these heroic ladies by the means they laudably used to preserve their chastity.

But the old spirit of Chivalry and enterprise was not dead within them, and they lacked but opportunity for its display, which was at length afforded them; for, under the conduct of their Grand Master, Foulques de Villart, they in the year 1308 attacked Rhodes, which, with seven neighbouring islands, fell into their hands. Thus they again became possessed of territory, affluence, and power; and the title under which they had achieved so much good, and under which so much valour had been exhibited, departed from them like a dream, and they adopted in its stead a name more expressive of their fighting propensities, but certainly less reflective of that piety and charitableness that formed their first strong characteristic. The Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem became the Knights of Rhodes; and with their new designation ceased all their association with, and recollection of, the Holy Land. But they were not destined long to enjoy their conquest in peace, for in the year following they were assailed by the Turks; but Ame, the fourth Earl of Savoy, rendered them powerful assistance, and they successfully defended themselves. The sultan Mahomet II. as vainly besieged them in 1481; and although several times besieged by the infidels, yet for more than two centuries did they retain the sovereignty of their conquests. But they were again scattered; for in 1522, Soliman II., the Magnificent, having determined upon their absolute destruction, assembled an army of three hundred thousand men, and entirely overpowered them. The small number of knights who survived the murderous siege of Rhodes⁶, with about four thousand soldiers and Catholic inhabitants of the

⁶ The Rhodians lost upwards of ninety-three thousand of their men, and the Turks a much greater number.

island, embarked on board the ships belonging to the Order on the 1st of January, 1523. They were allowed to carry with them their archives and their relics of saints, such things being altogether valueless in the eyes of the Turkish conquerors. The Grand Master was the last to embark ; and then, seeing all his faithful followers in safety, he gave the word, and the ships stood away from Rhodes, which he had so nobly defended. A dreadful tempest scattered this melancholy fleet ; but the ships, one by one, found refuge in different parts of the neighbouring island of Candia (the ancient Crete), which then belonged to the republic of Venice. From mixed motives of jealousy and selfishness, the Venetians had looked on with perfect indifference while the Turks were taking Rhodes, which island might be considered as the bulwark of Christianity, of their fair possessions in Candia, and of the colonies of Venice in other parts of the Levant, and which in policy, as well as in honour, they ought to have succoured and assisted. Irritated at these recollections, L'Isle Adam⁷, then Grand Master, hastened to quit Candia, prophesying what would be its fate from the spreading power of the Turks, and the want of union among Christians. This prediction was verified in the course of the following century, when Candia was taken, as Rhodes had been before it⁸. Towards the end of April, the vessels of the Order, which had been again dispersed by storms, met, with one or two exceptions, in the port of Messina ; and in the friendly island of Sicily, where the Knights had vast possessions, the Grand Master prepared his representations to the Pope and the great Christian sovereigns,

⁷ From the time of Foulques de Villart down to that of L'Isle Adam, there were eighteen Grand Masters.

⁸ Candia was completely conquered, after a ten years' war, in 1669.

whom he implored to appoint another island in the Mediterranean for the future residence of the Hospitallers, or, what was dearer to his heart, to aid him in the re-conquest of Rhodes. The plague breaking out at Messina, L'Isle Adam went with his sadly reduced fleet to the Bay of Naples, and after spending some time there in the neighbourhood of the ancient city of Baia, he sailed to Civita Vecchia, on the Roman coast, whence he repaired by land to Rome. The Pope appointed the city of Viterbo as the temporary residence of the knights, and allowed them to leave their ships in the port of Civita Vecchia. The energy of the old Grand Master was badly seconded by pontiff and by princes, who were either lukewarm, or so absorbed by their own projects of aggrandizement in Europe, as not to have a thought to spare for an island under the shores of Asia. The great enterprise of retaking Rhodes was therefore given up; and after seven years of uncertainty, disappointment, and intrigue, the Hospitallers were fain to accept from the Emperor Charles V. Malta, with its dependent island Goza, and the town of Tripoli, on the Barbary coast. In September, 1530, the effects, titles, and servants of the Order, together with good store of arms, ammunition, and provisions were shipped for Malta; and on the 26th of October following, old L'Isle Adam landed at that singular island, where he was received with regal honours. Immediately upon his arrival, the Knights gave into his hands, in quality of their chief, all monarchical power; after which he took formal possession of the sovereignty of the island. Thus the name and circumstances of the once famed Knights of St. John became again changed; and in the space of two hundred and thirty-eight years they had been severally known as the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of

Rhodes, and finally Knights of Malta. The Knights, however, had not been long at Malta, when internal dissensions threatened them with utter ruin⁹; and besides an accumulation of events occurred which shook the Order to its very centre. The unregretted downfall of one proud body (the Knights Templars, whose possessions had now become the property of the Knights of St. John¹) had already taken place. The Reformation had been slowly but surely working its way; the want of sympathy with the commonalty, the positive suppression of the Order in England, and the seizure of all their estates by Henry VIII., had taken place. These events, with other crosses, shook the health of the sturdy old L'Isle, who died in August, 1534; and the

⁹ A private quarrel arose between a Florentine and a French knight of the "language" of Provence: in a duel, to which it led, the Italian killed the Frenchman; upon which the French, pretending the Florentine had used foul play, fell upon him and his friends sword in hand. Retreating before superior numbers, the Italians took sanctuary in the palace of their patron the Prior of Rome; but before they reached that place of safety, several of them were sorely wounded. Maddened by this outrage, more than sixty Italian knights or laymen rushed out from the Prior's residence, attacked the knights of Provence, and soon provoked a general engagement with all the French "languages." To make the struggle about equal, the knights of Aragon and Castile joined the Italians. Night fell on a scene of carnage; and the darkness of it was horribly illuminated by flashes of artillery and musketry. It was not without the greatest difficulty that the Grand Master put down this civil war. The vengeance he afterwards took of the leaders in this mad affray seems to have been sufficiently severe; for twelve knights were degraded and expelled, and many others were put in sacks, and thrown into the sea, after the fashion in which the Turks disposed of their unfaithful wives.

¹ Philip, king of France, started accusations against the Templars of the most outrageous kind, with the ultimate view of seizing the extensive possessions which the Order held in his dominions. Scarcely any public sympathy was manifested in their behalf; and they fell, at once the victims of their own corruption and the cupidity of others.

Knights, not without reason, inscribed on his monument, “*Hic jacet virtus victrix fortunæ.*” To describe all the exploits of the Knights of Malta would be to write a history of the maritime wars of the Mediterranean; for during more than a century they shared in nearly every great naval battle fought by the Christians against the Mohammedans. Their galleys accompanied the famed expeditions of the Emperor Charles V. to Algiers and Tunis; they made many descents on the African coast by themselves; and for many years the Knights, by keeping in check the Mohammedan corsairs, were of essential service to the Christian world: but when, after successfully resisting a most formidable attack from the Turkish troops of Solyman, they gradually fell into a mode of life very different from that which had previously characterized them, and which was suddenly brought to a very ignominious conclusion, by the appearance of Napoleon, leading his Egyptian expedition, in 1798, and by his landing without opposition, through the mingled treachery and cowardice of the Knights, who, however, received their reward²,—the Order itself was then virtually abolished.

In this slight sketch, we have traced the progress of two of the most remarkable institutions the world has ever seen, rising from the humblest origin to the greatest magnitude; yet with all their rules, their ramifications, their force of arms, religious

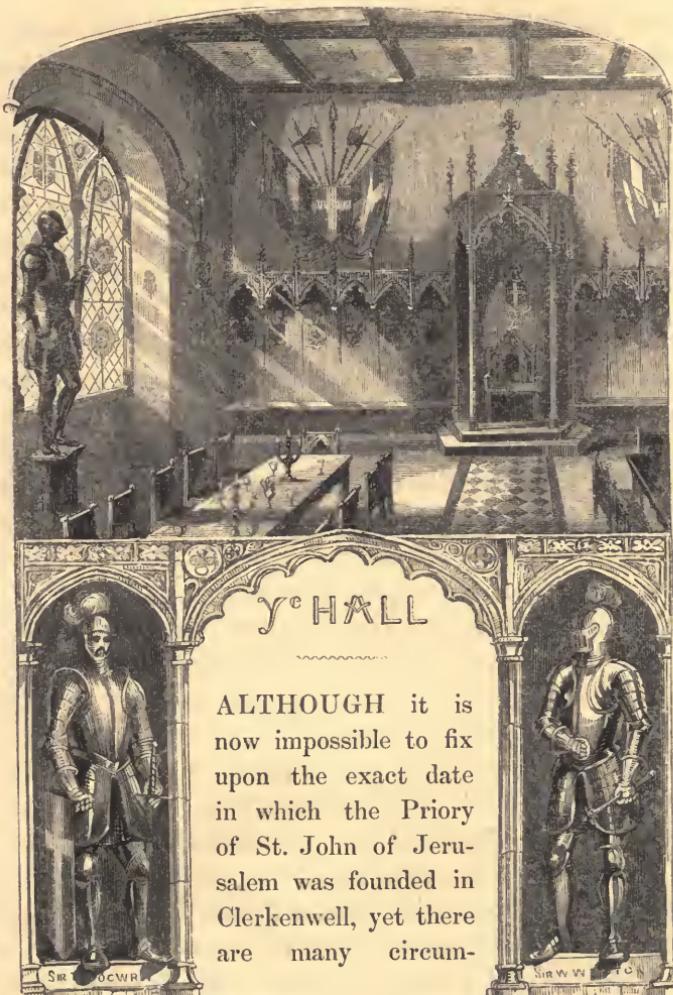
² It is not unworthy of notice, as evidence of the amazing strength of the place, as well as of the feeling of the French officers at so disgraceful a surrender, that one of them, Caffarelli, said to Napoleon, as they examined the works, “It is well, general, that some one was within to open the gate for us; we should have had some difficulty in entering, had the place been altogether empty.”

character, and romantic associations, they have fallen to rise no more. Even history has not informed us which was the principal cause of the downfall of the Templars, the cupidity of the King of France, or the immorality of the Order: certain it is they were most cruelly used. Persecution has begotten a sympathy and created a feeling for them that perhaps our severer judgments may not sanction. The Hospitallers (the greater body of the two) have literally died out, died of absolute inanity: their requiem has been sung from the impregnable rock of Malta; the Mediterranean has mingled in the moan; and the once stalwart Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem are amongst the things that were.

“ As ocean rolls its billows to the shore,
The distant waves impelling those before;
As leaves luxuriant, which the woods supply,
In summer flourish, and in autumn die;
So generations pass: at Nature's call
They rise successive, and successive fall.”



Chapter III.



ALTHOUGH it is now impossible to fix upon the exact date in which the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem was founded in Clerkenwell, yet there are many circum-

stances confirming us in the belief, that it was about the year 1100. Neither can we, after so long a lapse of time, positively decide which of the two large religious establishments—viz., the Nunnery of St. Mary, once occupying the site St. James's Church now stands upon, or the Priory of St. John—may claim priority: in all probability, they were both founded at the same time; it is at least certain that both emanated from the pious zeal and munificent liberality of the same founders, Jordan Brisset, and Muriel his wife. Dugdale, than whom we have not a better authority, states, that, in the first charter given to the Nunnery by Jordan Brisset, “he gave to Robert his chaplain fourteen acres of land, &c., free from all encumbrances, so that the Hospitallers might claim nothing of them:” and yet, in the “*Registrum Munimentorum, &c. Prioratus Hospitalis Sancti Johannis Jerusalem in Angliâ,*” which is still preserved in the Cotton Library, he proves quite the contrary, stating that “Lord Jordan Brisset founded, in the reign of Henry I., about the year of our Lord 1100, the House and Hospital of St. John of Clerkenwell. He was the founder also of the Nuns’ House of Clerkenwell, and purchased of them ten acres of land (on which he founded the same house and hospital), and for these ten acres gave to the same nuns twenty acres in his lordship of Willinghall, in the county of Kent, &c.” Although the Register of the Priory is preserved in the Cotton Library, and contains vast information and important particulars of its various endowments, and from which its landed possessions appear to have been widely spread over Middlesex, no subsequent writers have attempted to reconcile these flat and positive contradictions. I think we may thereby justly infer they were founded at one and the same period. The land, then termed “forest land,” was granted to

Jordan Brisset, by William Rufus, as a reward for services rendered to his father, William of Normandy. Very soon after its establishment, the Hospital became one of the largest and most important in the metropolis or its environs; and all writers concur in the fact, that it was most palatial-like in its arrangement, and beautifully ornamented in appearance. From the situation of many of the beautiful ruins now existing in our country, it is evident that most of the religious fraternities understood tolerably well the nature of the locality in which to found their establishments; and the Knights Hospitallers were certainly not far behind in a full and due appreciation of the advantages of such a spot as Clerkenwell, rising gently from the banks of our own old Thames,—watered by innumerable springs of the purest water,—with the clear, pellucid river Fleet (then called the “River of Wells”) gracefully meandering along their western boundary,—and the background of deep umbrageous foliage bearing away to the north, consisting of undulating hill and dale, bounded by, and terminating in, the beautiful uplands of Highgate and Hampstead (then a part of the great forest of Middlesex).

“ In lowly dale, fast by a river’s side,
With woody hill, o’er hill encompass’d round,
It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground!”

We think such a spot must have had more than ordinary attraction.

In the year 1185, the Priory Church was dedicated by Heraclius, patriarch of Jerusalem, who happened to be in England at

that time, conducting an embassy made to the sovereigns of the West, soliciting assistance in furtherance of the Crusade. He was accompanied by Roger de Moulines, the seventh Grand Master of the Hospitallers, and also by Arnauld of Troye, Grand Master of the Templars, who, being seized with a violent distemper, died at Verona on the way. In the same year, Heraclius also dedicated the New Temple Church in Fleet Street, so called because the Templars, before the building of this house, had their Temple in "Oldbourne." From the dedication in 1187, a steady augmentation of wealth and power seems to have attended the establishment in Clerkenwell. The founders had long since passed away to

"That bourne from whence no traveller returns."

On the authority of the "Register" of St. John's Hospital, Jordan Brisset, the founder, is said to have died on the 15th December, 1110, and, according to several writers, is said to have been buried within the Priory. Muriel, co-foundress with her husband, is stated to have died on the 1st May, 1112, and to have been buried in the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem. But Weever says that Jordan Brisset died the 17th September, about the year 1124, and Muriel his wife on the 1st May next following. Both he and the indefatigable Stowe, however, concur in stating they were both interred in the Chapter-house of the Nunnery, and in no part of the Hospital. At this distance of time it matters but little (except to the zealous antiquary) where they rest; they have passed

"The margin of the inky flood,
Mournful and calm!"

Their dust has commingled with its kindred dust;

"No trophy, sword, or hatchment o'er their bones!"

their names live but in the musty records of Museum manuscript or time-worn tome; and all the visible remains of their once great structure is part of a Parish Church, their grand and gloomy Gate, and coffin-full Crypt.



Crypt beneath St. John's Church.

Wealth still rolled in upon the Order; and through the bounty of prince and private person, they rose to so high an estate and such great riches, (to use the words of Camden,) that "after a sort they wallowed in wealth." At about the date we write of, this great body possessed in Christendom alone nineteen thousand manors or lordships. With their immense wealth, importance and position followed. Their Prior was prime baron

of the land : and their power was so great, they could even prescribe places in the state for those whose liberality created some call upon their gratitude. "But above all their benefactors," Weever tells us, "they held themselves most bound to Roger de Mowbray, whose liberalitie to their Order was so great, that by a common consent in their Chapter they made a decree, that himselfe might remit and pardon any of the Brotherhood whomsoever, in case he had trespassed against any of the statutes and ordinances of the Order, confessing, and acknowledging withal his offence and errour. And also, the Knights of this Order granted in token of thankfulnesse to John de Mowbray, lord of the isle of Axholme, the successor of the foresaid Roger, that himselfe and his successors, in every of their councils and assemblies, as well in England as beyond seas, should be received and entertained alwaies in the second place, next the king !" In 1211, Joan, Lady Grey, relict of a Sir Robert Grey, of Hampton, left by her will the whole manor and manor-house of Hampton to the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem. Doubtless they had many calls upon their resources ; and although greatly aggrandizing themselves, we are not to suppose the purposes of their foundation were entirely lost sight of, or the Crusade for the Cross forgotten ; for, in the year 1237, we find a body of Knights, consisting of three hundred, preceded by Theodric their Prior, at the head of a considerable body of armed stipendiaries, leaving the house in Clerkenwell for the Holy Land. They marched with the banner of St. John proudly unfurled before them, and as they passed over London Bridge, saluted, with hood in hand, the crowds congregated to see their departure, recommending themselves and their cause to the prayers of the people. During the Grand Mastership of Bertrand de Texis (fourteenth

Grand Master), a considerable number of knights enrolled themselves under the banner of Don James the First of Arragon, and engaged in the war which that monarch waged with the Moors of Valencia. They performed such deeds of valour at the siege of that city, that after its surrender the king recompensed them with a grant of several towns and dependencies, in absolute property to the Order. In the "Register" before alluded to, along with its list of Priors and other curious matters in connexion with the Hospital, is the following extraordinary gift made by the Prior to the Nunnery Church:—"Brother Roger de Vere, Prior, gave to the Church of Clerkenwell (*i. e.* the Nunnery Church) *one of the six waterpots in which Jesus changed the water into wine!* in the year of our Lord 1269, and died on the 15th February, in the year of our Lord 1270." Alice, or Alicia, de Barrowe, in the year 1271, gave the entire lordship of Highbury and Newton to the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem¹. They had before gained considerable possessions in Islington. The Lords Priors made the manor-house here their refuge, or country seat, and in all probability added greatly to its splendour, as the site long after its destruction was called Highbury Castle. At a Council held at Vienna in 1324, it was decided that "all the lands of the Templars (lest the same should be put to profane uses) should be given to the Knights Hospitallers of the Order of St. John Baptist, called St. John of Jerusalem." The downfall of the Templars but increased the pomp, pride, and power of the Hospitallers. In the reign of Edward the Second, the revenues of the Templars in England were granted by act of parliament to the Hospitallers. Edward

¹ Dugdale, Monast. II. 543.

the Third confirmed the grant made by his predecessor; and, according to Stow, they (the Knights) in the same reign granted for a certain rent "the said Temple, with the appurtenances thereunto adjoining, to the students of the common laws of England, in whose possession the same hath ever since remained." But evil days were in store for the haughty Knights of St. John; for in the year 1381, the discontents of the people being inflamed to desperation by the impolitic measures of their rulers, the celebrated insurrection conducted by Wat Tyler broke forth, and was attended with most disastrous consequences to this wealthy and powerful Order. The dislike to the Order itself was no doubt much augmented by the injudicious interference of the then Lord Prior, Sir Robert Hales. Although the commons rose *en masse* against the tyranny of their oppressors, they had no personal dislike to the youthful King Richard; for having sent word that he must needs come and see them, which Richard was anxious and willing to do, "there were some," says Hollingshed, "that thought it best that he should go to them, and know what their meaning was; but Simon de Sudburie, the Archbishop of Canturburie, that was Lord Chancellor, and also Sir Robert Hales, Lord of St. John's, and as then Lord Treasuror, spake earnestlie against that aduise, and would not by anie means that the King should go to such a lot of bare-legged ribalds. After the commons understood that the King would not come to them by means of the contrarie aduise given to him by those two persons, the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Treasuror, they were maruellouslie moued against them, and sware that they would not rest till they had got them, and chopped off their heads, calling them trators to the King and realme." The commons, as they are termed

by Stow, on the 13th of June, and being the Feast of Corpus Christi, divided themselves into three bodies. An immense assembly attacked and fired the great Priory, causing it to burn for the space of seven days, not suffering any one to



St. John's Priory on fire.

quench it; while another party, estimated by Hollingshed at twenty thousand strong, "ooke in hand to ruinate" the Prior's country seat, and marched to Highbury for that purpose. The mansion was of such strength and solidity, that they were obliged to demolish many parts which the fire could not consume. Ere their arrival, the Lord Prior, Sir Robert Hales, had taken refuge in the Tower, along with the young King and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The insurgents acquired a

power under such leaders as Wat Tyler which they evidently knew not how to use. They committed many acts of violence; and their first business on getting possession of the Tower was the realization of their oath relative to the Prior of St. John's (who was described as a most valiant knight); for after being insultingly used by the mob, he and the Archbishop of Canterbury, together with John Legg, one of the King's serjeants-at-arms, and his confessor, a Franciscan friar named William Appledone, were beheaded on Tower Hill. This was the greatest calamity that ever befell this house, from the period of its rise till its final dissolution. The work of restoration soon commenced: the house was not, however, fully restored till one hundred and twenty-three years afterwards. Whether or not Highbury Castle was restored by the Knights to its pristine grandeur, or ever again rose from its ashes is unknown, but we have it on record that the Priory was not entirely rebuilt until the year 1504, when the finishing hand was put to it by Sir Thomas Docwra, then Prior.



Arms of the Hospital and Sir Thomas Docwra, Prior, in North Front of Gate.

In 1401, Grendon, Prior of the Hospital, who "took upon him to go to Rhodes to fight, according to his vow, in defence of the holy mother Church, against Turks and Saracens," obtained letters from King Henry the Sixth, commendatory to all foreign princes, and characteristic of the high respect then entertained towards the head of this house. In 1437, Henry the Sixth held at the Hospital a council, in which Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and others, were appointed his commission of regency. There are several documents extant, in which the power and importance of this branch of the Order is manifest, among which are several showing the continual call made upon them for assistance and succour from the different Grand Masters at Rhodes. In a Chapter held here on the 11th of January, 1514, Sir Thomas Doebla being then Prior, a lease was granted to Cardinal Wolsey of the manor of Hampton, the Cardinal having commissioned the most eminent physicians in England, and even called in the aid of learned doctors from Padua, to select the most healthy spot within twenty miles of London, for the purpose of erecting a palace suitable to his rank and ambition. This curious document, which is given entire in the Gentleman's Magazine for January, 1834, is from the Cottonian Manuscript in the British Museum, and among other conditions therein mentioned is one to this effect:—"And the seid Priour and his brethern for them and their successours graunten the seid Archebusshop and his assignes yerely during the seid terme shal have and take at their libertie fourre loades of woode and tymber able for pyls for the reparacion and sustentacion of the were called Hampton Were, the same woods and tymber to be felled and conveyed at the costes of the said Archebusshop and of his assignes, in and fro Seynt

Johns Woode in the seid countie of Midd." At length arrived the time when the haughty spirit of the Hospitaller was to be humbled, and the corporate body to which he belonged dissolved. They had

" Ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers on a sea of glory ;
But far beyond their depth."

That arch despoiler Henry the Eighth had already fixed his eye upon their wealth. Many monastic establishments had already ceased to exist; and although this presented other features than that of a mere monastery, still it was doomed; the fiat had gone forth, and positive annihilation was the verdict. Its long-established consequence could not save it from the general fate: the tyrant Henry was not the man to hold his hand, having already seized and appropriated many similar houses. It may be worth remarking, that the act (32nd Henry VIII., 1540) passed through the Commons' House for the suppression of this monastery, exceeded all others for expedition, it having been read the first time on the 22nd, the second on the 26th, and the third on the 29th, of the same month of April². The annual revenues of this great foundation at the time of its dissolution amounted, according to Dugdale and Speed, to £2385 12s. 8d., but according to Stow to £3385 19s. 8d. I think we may observe with Malcom, "that when this Leviathan of plunder (Henry) seized these revenues, we cannot be at a loss for his motive.

² Burnet's Hist. of the Reformation.

“ Tyrannic cruelty, voluptuous pride,
Insatiable licentiousness and guilt,
So share this monarch, we can ne’er decide
On what one vice his ruling wish was built.”

From the foundation of this house till its dissolution, there were, according to Newcourt, thirty-seven. Priors, commencing with Garnerius de Neapol, and ending with Sir William Weston. He was the younger brother to Sir Richard Weston, one of the Gentlemen of the King’s Privy Chamber, and Master of the Court of Wards. It appears Sir William was favoured much beyond the heads of other religious houses; for the King purposed to allow him £1000 per annum out of the wreck of his former priory. The King’s bounty to him was useless; he did not live to enjoy it, dying of a broken heart. To use the simple and emphatic language of Weever—“ So it fortuned that upon the 7th of May (1540), being Ascension-day, and the same day of the dissolution of the house, he was dissolved by death, which strooke him to the heart at the first time when he heard of the dissolution of his order.” He was buried in the chancel of the church, which had belonged to the recently dissolved nunnery of St. Mary: a splendid marble monument was erected to his memory, an engraving and full description of which is given in Cromwell’s History of Clerkenwell (p. 188). Consequent upon the dissolution, an immediate distribution of hospital property took place. Sir John Dudlie, Sir Simeon Siemer, Sir Thomas Pointings, Sir George Carew (knights), Anthonie Kingston and Richard Cromwell (esquires), who had been the challengers in a great justing at Westminster on the 1st of May, 1540, had so pleased the King, that he afterwards gave to each of the above challengers, as a “ rewarde for their valiantness,” a hundred

marks per annum and a house to dwell in, out of the said lands, for ever. The manor of Highbury (before alluded to), the country-seat of the Priors³, was bestowed upon Thomas Cromwell, afterwards Earl of Essex, upon whose attainder and death it reverted to the crown. Five years subsequent to the suppression, the site and preeinct of the Priory was granted to John Lord Lisle for his services as Lord High Admiral. Only the lead, bells, stones, glass, iron, and other things of the church were specially reserved to the King's Majesty. Throughout all the division and devastation committed by Henry, the buildings were preserved from "down pulling" (as Stow terms it) "so long as he reigned, and was used as a storehouse for the King's toils and tents for hunting, and for the wars, &c." After the death of Henry, the Priory church fell a sacrifice to the proud Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector to the young King Edward the Sixth, who destroyed greater portions of the buildings for the purpose of erecting a magnificent palace for himself, which he called Somerset House. Speaking of the Priory Church, Stow thus describes it: "In the third of King Edward the Sixth, the church for the most part, to wit, the body and side isles, with the great bell-tower, (a most curious peece of workmanshippe, grauen, guilt, and inameled, to the great beautifying of the cittie, and passing all others that I have seene,) was undermined, and blowne up with gunpowder: the stone thereof was employed in building the Lord Protector's house at the Strand."

Small thanks are due to the Duke of Somerset for the Gate now standing; the probability is it was retained for its utility,

³ Now Highbury House, built by John Dawes, Esq., in the year 1781.

forming, as it doubtless did at that time, a barrier to the interior property. Upon the death of Edward and the elevation of Mary to the throne, the Priory experienced some slight and fitful return to its former greatness; for Mary, in her zeal to establish Roman Catholicism, dispatched an envoy to Malta, with a letter to the Grand Master, Giovanni d'Oneda, requesting him to send two knights to England to take possession of those estates which her father Henry had unjustly torn from them. Part of the quire which remained, with some side chapels, was by Cardinal Pool (or Pole) closed up at the west end, and otherwise repaired. Sir Thomas Tresham, knight, was then made Prior; and several Brother Knights were again established in the Priory, Queen Mary by charter confirming the same, and again incorporating the Order; giving them a seal, and granting them the "House," the "Gate-house," the "Church," and all the boundary garden within the precincts of the Hospital, also great St. John's Wood, near "Marybone," in Middlesex, and the manors of Purfleet, Witham, Temple Roden, and Chingford, in Essex, and the manors, lands, and tenements in divers counties in England which of old did belong to the Priory. But the Order was again suppressed in the first year of Elizabeth. We cannot tell how long the so lately elected Prior survived their second suppression; but after his death he was buried in Ruston Church, Northamptonshire, where there is a monument erected to his memory.

In the year 1604 a grant was made by James the First to Sir Roger Wilbraham, for his life, of the Grand South Gate of the Priory; and by letters patent of the same monarch, dated May 9th, 1607, the site or house of the late Hospital, with all



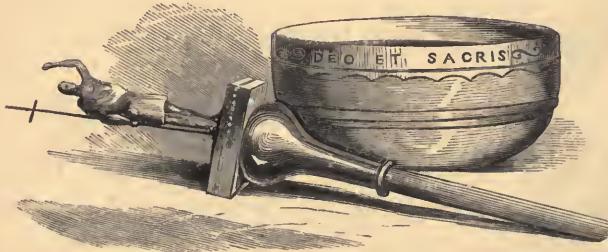
St. John's Priory, from Hollar

the precinct of the said house, containing about five acres, was granted to Ralph Freeman and his heirs. The Choir passed by deed into the hands of Sir William Cecil, Lord Burleigh, son of the Earl of Exeter. In the reign of Charles the First it became the property of Robert Bruce, Earl of Elgin, consequent upon his marriage with the Lady Diana, daughter to Thomas Earl of Exeter. The son of the Earl of Elgin was created Earl of Aylesbury, and the building was then converted into a private chapel for the use of the Earl, and for many years after was called Aylesbury Chapel. The estates remained in the hands of this distinguished family above a hundred years, with but little of interest, unless we except the following futile attempt to resuscitate Roman Catholicism on the spot that so long had

fostered it. Cromwell, in his History of Clerkenwell (p. 86), thus describes the event:—“The reign of James II. affords a rather curious incident in the ecclesiastical history of our parish. This was no other than the temporary revival of a *Roman Catholic convent* in St. John’s Square; no mention of which, the author has reason to believe, has ever been before the public, and for his knowledge of which he is indebted (through the medium of a literary friend) to a manuscript preserved in the library of *Ampleforth College*—a community of English Benedictines near York. From this manuscript it appears, that in the reign spoken of, a certain ‘*Father Corker*’ was ‘resident in England to the Elector of Cologne’ (Cologne); and that, having first set up a chapel in the Savoy, from which, owing to a dispute with the Jesuits, he was persuaded by the King to remove, he went to St. John’s, corruptly called St. Jone’s, and there built a mighty pretty convent, which the Revolution of 1688 pulled down to the ground, to his very great loss, for as he was Dean of the Rosary, he melted down the great gold chalice and patten to help towards this building, supplying the want of them with one of silver just of that make. He counted this convent for the conversion of souls amongst those things which the holy Fathers of the Church allow the church treasure to be spent on. This convent seems to have cost the Benedictines several considerable sums of money: frequent entries appear in their account-books of that period of amounts paid towards its erection, &c. It is always styled in these books ‘The Factory,’ or, ‘The Factory in Clerkenwell.’ In the year 1721, the estate was finally purchased by Simon Michell, and in 1723 he repaired and enlarged the chapel. He also built the present west front, and re-roofed the whole: he then disposed of the

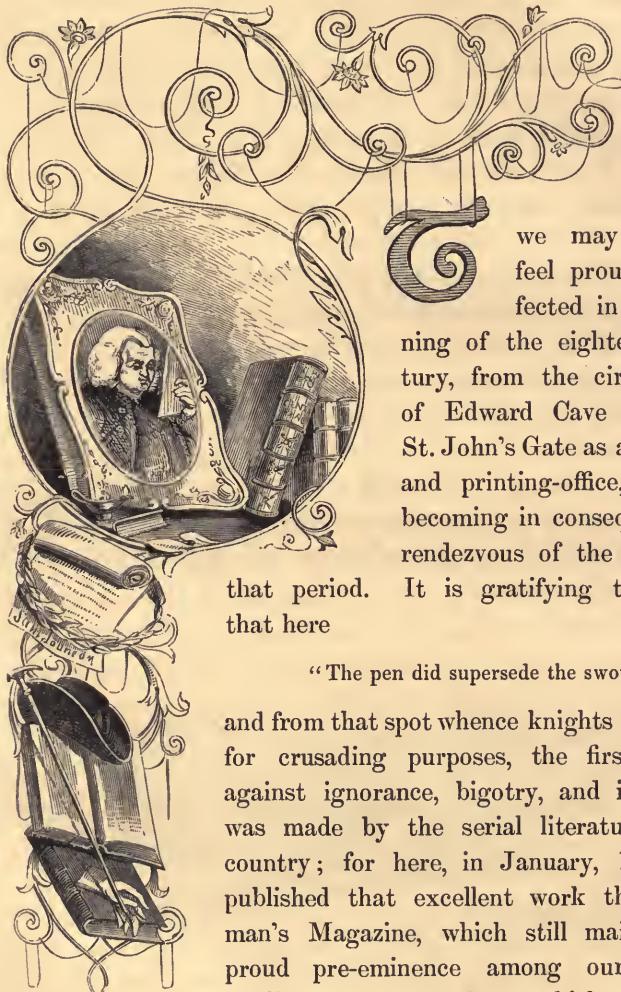
church, vaults, vestry-room, the ground adjacent, with two messuages in St. John's Street, for the sum of £2950, to the Commissioners for Building Fifty new Churches. The building, after enrolment in Chancery, and consecration by Edmund Gibson, Lord Bishop of London, was declared to be a parish-church for ever, and formally styled 'The Church of St. John, Clerkenwell, in the county of Middlesex.' A deal of litigation followed, consequent upon the constitution of the parish: the authorities of St. James's not consenting to take part in the new settlement, and denying the power of Queen Anne's Commission to divide the parish." It would not be pertinent to our subject to trace all the vexatious law proceedings attending these differences; the particulars may be found at large in Cromwell's History of the Parish, quoting from whom, we will quit that portion of our Work treating of the ecclesiastical arrangements of St. John's parish. "For more than twelve years there were suits, actions, informations, mandamus, between the opposed ecclesiastical powers, relative to the officers attempted to be appointed by the Commissioners for the parish of their creation. The consequence finally was, that no officers, except the churchwardens, were, or now are, elected for the parish of St. John. St. James's and St. John's are recognized in different acts of the legislature as *parishes* and as *districts*; and in two acts St. James's is styled both a parish and a district of that parish. The minister of the little territory of St. John's has the ecclesiastical rank of *rector*; while the minister of St. James's, who is by election minister of all Clerkenwell, being chosen by the general voice of the inhabitants, has the humbler style (as the word is now understood) of *curate*. The curate is by law entitled to receive all the surplice fees of St. John's for its rector's per-

formance of the duty. The inhabitants of both districts have an equal right to vote in vestry. The residents of St. John's assist to elect the minister of St. James's, but the residents of St. James's have no voice in choosing the minister of St. John's; while the churchwardens of St. James's have to the full all the customary powers of such officers, the powers of the churchwardens of St. John's are confined to the church and cemetery; and while the entire parish contributes alike to the support of its poor, by virtue of one common assessment, the overseers of the poor are legally restricted to the residents of St. James's. The patronage of the rectory of St. John's was, by the act of Queen Anne, provisionally given to the Crown, until the separation it contemplated from the parent parish should take place, when it would devolve to the inhabitants; but that separation not having been effected, it has been ever since in the hands of the Lord Chancellor. Its emoluments arise out of two-thirds of the pew rents, and the annual allowance of eighty guineas from Queen Anne's Bounty."



Old Baptismal Bowl and Head of Beadle's Staff belonging to the Parish of St. John.

Chapter IV.



that period. It is gratifying to observe
that here

“The pen did supersede the sword,”

and from that spot whence knights had sallied for crusading purposes, the first crusade against ignorance, bigotry, and intolerance was made by the serial literature of our country; for here, in January, 1731, was published that excellent work the Gentleman’s Magazine, which still maintains its proud pre-eminence among our monthly publications; and from which the word

HE realization of that literary association, of which we may certainly feel proud, was effected in the beginning of the eighteenth century, from the circumstance of Edward Cave occupying St. John’s Gate as a residence and printing-office, and its becoming in consequence the rendezvous of the literati of

" Magazine," as applied to periodical literature, originated. It may not be out of place to gratify our readers with some account of the man who projected the miscellany that has had such a long and successful career, and whose characteristic woodcut of the Gate upon the cover shows a recognition of the spot that gave it birth. We take the following from the pen of Dr. Samuel Johnson, published in vol. xxv. of the Gentleman's Magazine.

" Edward Cave was born at Newton in Warwickshire, February 29th, 1691. It was fortunate for Edward Cave that, having a disposition to literary attainments, he was not cut off by the poverty of his parents from opportunities of cultivating his faculties. The school of Rugby, in which he had, by the rules of its foundation, a right to be instructed, was then in high reputation, under the Rev. Mr. Holyock, to whose care most of the neighbouring families, even of the highest rank, entrusted their sons. He had judgment to discover, and for some time generosity to encourage, the genius of young Cave ; and was so well pleased with his quick progress in the school, that he declared his resolution to breed him for the university, and recommend him as servitor to some of his scholars of high rank. But prosperity which depends upon the caprice of others is of short duration ! Cave's superiority in literature exalted him to an invidious familiarity with boys who were far above him in rank and expectations ; and as in unequal associations it always happens, whatever unlucky prank was played was imputed to Cave. When any mischief, great or small, was done, though perhaps others boasted of the stratagem when it was successful ; yet, upon detection or miscarriage, the fault was sure to fall upon poor Cave.

" At last his mistress, by some invisible means, lost a favourite cock. Cave was, with little examination, stigmatized as the thief or murderer ; not because he was more apparently criminal than others, but because he was more easily reached by vindictive justice. From that time Mr. Holyock withdrew his kindness from him, and treated him with harshness, which the crime in its utmost aggravation could scarcely deserve, and which surely he would have forborne, had he considered how hardly the habitual influence of birth and fortune is resisted ; and how frequently men, not wholly without sense or virtue, are betrayed to acts more atrocious than the robbery of a hen-roost, by a desire of pleasing their superiors. These reflections his master never made, or made without effect ; for under pretence that Cave obstructed the discipline of the school by selling clandestine assistance and supplying exercises to idlers, he was oppressed with unreasonable tasks, that there might be an opportunity of quarrelling with his failure ; and when his diligence had surmounted them, no regard was paid to the performance. Cave bore this persecution for a while, and then left the school, and the hope of a literary education, to seek some other means of gaining a livelihood.

" He was first placed with a collector of the excise. He used to recount with some pleasure a journey or two which he rode with him as clerk, and relate the victories that he gained over the excisemen in grammatical disputations. But the insolence of his mistress, who employed him in servile drudgery, quickly disgusted him ; and he went up to London in quest of more suitable employment.

"He was recommended to a timber-merchant at Bankside, and while he was there on liking, is said to have given hopes of great mercantile abilities. But this place he soon left, I know not for what reason, and was bound apprentice to Mr. Collins, a printer of some reputation, and deputy alderman.

"This was a trade for which men were formerly qualified by a literary education, and which was pleasing to Cave, because it furnished some employment for his scholastic attainments. Here, therefore, he resolved to settle, though his master and mistress lived in perpetual discord, and their house could be no comfortable habitation. From the inconvenience of these domestic tumults he was soon released, having in two years attained so much skill in his art, and gained so much the confidence of his master, that he was sent, without any superintendent, to conduct a printing-house at Norwich, and publish a weekly newspaper. In this undertaking he met with some opposition, which produced a public controversy, and procured young Cave reputation as a writer.

"His master died before his apprenticeship was expired; and as he was not able to bear the perverseness of his mistress, he quitted her house upon a stipulated allowance, and married a young widow, with whom he lived at Bow. When his apprenticeship was over, he worked as a journeyman at the printing-house of Mr. Barber, a man much distinguished and employed by the Tories, whose principles had at that time so much prevalence with Cave, that he was for some years a writer in 'Mint's Journal,' which (though he afterwards obtained by his wife's interest a small place in the Post Office) he for some time con-

tinued: but as interest is powerful, and conversation, however mean, in time persuasive, he by degrees inclined to another party, in which, however, he was always moderate, though steady and determined.

"When he was admitted into the Post Office, he still continued, at his intervals of attendance, to exercise his trade, or to employ himself with some typographical business. He corrected the '*Gradus ad Parnassum*,' and was liberally rewarded by the Company of Stationers. He wrote an account of the criminals, which had for some time a considerable sale, and published many little pamphlets, that accident brought into his hands, of which it would be very difficult to recover the memory. By the correspondence which his place in the Post Office facilitated, he procured country newspapers, and sold their intelligence to a journalist of London for a guinea a week.

"He was afterwards raised to the office of clerk of the franks, in which he acted with great spirit and firmness, and often stopped franks which were given by members of parliament to their friends, because he thought such extension of peculiar right illegal. This raised many complaints; and having stopped, among others, a frank given to the old Duchess of Marlborough by Mr. Walter Plummer, he was cited before the House for a breach of privilege, and accused, I suppose very unjustly, of opening letters to detect them. He was treated with great harshness and severity, but declining their questions by pleading his oath of secrecy, was at last dismissed. And it must be recorded to his honour, that when he was ejected from his office, he did not think himself discharged from his trust, but con-

tinued to refuse, to his nearest friends, any information about the management of the office.

" By this constancy of diligence and diversification of employment, he in time collected a sum sufficient for the purchase of a small printing-office, and began the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' a periodical pamphlet, of which the scheme is known wherever the English language is spoken. To this undertaking he owed the affluence in which he passed the last twenty years of his life, and the fortune which he left behind him, which, though large, had been yet larger, had he not rashly and wantonly impaired it by innumerable projects, of which I know not that ever one succeeded.

" When he formed the project, he was far from expecting the success which he found; and others had so little prospect of its consequence, that, though he had for several years talked of his plan among printers and booksellers, none of them thought it worth the trial. That they were not restrained by their virtue from the execution of another man's design, was apparent, as soon as that design began to be gainful; for in a few years a multitude of magazines arose and perished,—only 'The London Magazine,' supported by a powerful association of booksellers, and circulated with all the art and all the cunning of the trade, exempted itself from the general fate of Cave's invaders, and obtained, though not an equal, yet a considerable sale.

" Cave now began to aspire to popularity; and being a greater lover of poetry than any other art, he sometimes offered subjects for poems, and proposed prizes for the best performances. The

first prize was £50, for which, being but newly acquainted with wealth, and thinking the influence of £50 extremely great, he expected the first authors of the kingdom to appear as competitors, and offered the allotment of the prize to the Universities. But when the time came, no name was seen among the writers that had ever been seen before; the Universities and several private men rejected the province of assigning the prize. At all this Mr. Cave wondered for a while; but his natural judgment and a wider acquaintance with the world soon cured him of his astonishment, as of many other prejudices and errors. Nor have many men been raised by accident or industry to sudden riches, that retained less of the meanness of their former state.

" He continued to improve his magazine, and had the satisfaction of seeing its success proportionate to his diligence, till in the year 1751 his wife died of an asthma; with which, though he seemed not at first much affected, yet in a few days he lost his sleep and his appetite, and, lingering two years, fell, by drinking acid liquors, into a diarrhoea, and afterwards into a kind of lethargic insensibility, in which one of the last acts of reason he exerted, was fondly to press the hand that is now writing this little narrative. He died on January 10, 1754, æt. 63, having just concluded the twenty-third annual collection.

" He was a man of large stature, not only tall, but bulky, and was, when young, of remarkable strength and activity. He was generally healthful, and capable of much labour and long application; but in the latter years of his life was afflicted with the gout, which he endeavoured to cure or alleviate by a total abstinence both from strong liquors and animal food. From

animal food he abstained about four years, and from strong liquors much longer ; but the gout continued unconquered, perhaps unabated.

“ His resolution and perseverance were very uncommon : whatever he undertook, neither expense nor fatigue were able to repress him ; but his constancy was calm, and to those who did not know him appeared faint and languid ; but he always went forward, though he moved slowly.

“ The same chilness of mind was observable in his conversation : he was watching the minutest accent of those whom he disgusted by seeming inattention ; and his visitant was surprised when he came a second time by preparations to execute the scheme which he supposed never to have been heard.

“ He was, consistently with his general tranquillity of mind, a tenacious maintainer, though not a clamorous demander, of his right. In youth, having summoned his fellow-journeymen to concert measures against the oppression of their masters, he mounted a kind of rostrum, and harangued them so efficaciously, that they determined to resist all future invasions. And when the Stamp officers demanded to stamp the last half-sheet of the magazines, Mr. Cave alone defeated their claim, to which the proprietors of the rival magazines would meanly have submitted.

“ He was a friend rather easy and constant, than zealous and active ; yet many instances might be given, both where his money and his diligence were employed liberally for others. His enmity was in the like manner cool and deliberate ; but

though cool, it was not insidious, and though deliberate, not pertinacious.

" His mental faculties were slow : he saw little at a time, but that little he saw with great exactness. He was long in finding the right, but seldom failed to find it at last. His affections were not easily gained, and his opinion not quickly discovered. His reserve, as it might hide his faults, concealed his virtues ; but such he was, as they who best knew him have most lamented."

Nichols, in his " Biographical Memoirs," gives a good deal of valuable information and interesting anecdote relative to Edward Cave. He says—" that from his first connexion with the Norwich newspaper, he had conceived a strong idea of publishing the parliamentary debates. In 1728 he experienced great inconvenience and expense, having been ordered into the custody of the serjeant-at-arms for supplying information for the above purpose. After a confinement of several days, on stating his sorrow for the offence, and pleading that he had a wife and family who suffered much by his imprisonment, he was discharged with a reprimand, on paying the accustomed fees. But in July, 1736, he boldly ventured to put into practice what he had so long contemplated—viz. the inserting in the ' Gentleman's Magazine' the parliamentary debates." His method of proceeding is thus related by Sir John Hawkins in his Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson :—" Taking with him a friend or two, he found means to procure for them and himself admission into the gallery of the House of Commons, or to some concealed station in the other House ; and then they privately took down notes of the several

speeches, and the general tendency and substance of the arguments. Thus furnished, Cave and his associates would adjourn to a neighbouring tavern, and compare and adjust their notes ; by means whereof, and the help of their memories, they became enabled to fix at least the substance of what they had so lately heard and remarked. The reducing this crude matter into form was the work of a future day and of an abler hand—Guthrie, the historian, a writer for the booksellers, whom Cave retained for the purpose." But these debates were not given till the end of the session, and then only with the initial and final letters of each speaker. These proceedings running counter to the rule or privileges of the House, the caution of Cave suggested to him a popular fiction ; for in June, 1738, he prefaced the debates by what he chose to call "An Appendix to Captain Lemuel Gulliver's Account of the famous Empire of Lilliput;" and the proceedings in Parliament were given under the title of "Debates in the Senate of Great Lilliput." Cave, in the latter part of his life, manifested his good fortune by "buying" (as Sir John Hawkins, who is not the most liberal biographer, says) "an old coach, and a pair of older horses ; and, that he might avoid the suspicion of pride in setting up an equipage, he displayed to the world the source of his affluence, by a representation of St. John's Gate, instead of his arms, on the door-panel. This he told me was the reason of distinguishing his carriage from others, by what some might think a whimsical device, and also for causing it to be engraven on all his plate."

To Cave we are indebted for that bright galaxy of talent and halo of genius that concentrated round and enlightened the gloomy portal of St. John's. The necessities of the reckless

spendthrift, but highly-gifted Richard Savage, brought him here, placing him under obligations to Cave. Here, too, Dr. Samuel Johnson (the giant of literature) first gave to the world a "spice of his quality." Boswell says, that "when Dr. Johnson first saw St. John's Gate, he beheld it with reverence:" alluding to that kind of feeling engendered in the breast of a young author for the magazine or publication which first entertained him, or gave him opportunity to see himself in print. His first performance in the "Gentleman's Magazine," which for many years was his principal source of employment and support, was a copy of Latin complimentary verses in March, 1738.

The misconduct and misfortune of Richard Savage reduced him to the lowest depths of want and misery. As a writer for his bread, his visits to St. John's Gate brought him and Johnson much together. Johnson, it appears, had a room set apart for him there. Hawkins says, that, when he "penned" the debates,



Dr. Johnson's Chair.

"they were written at those seasons when he was able to raise his imagination to such a pitch of fervour as bordered upon enthusiasm ; which that he might the better do, his practice was to shut himself up in a room assigned him at St. John's Gate, to which he would not suffer any one to approach, except the compositor or Cave's boy for matter, which, as fast as he composed, he tumbled out at the door."

Poverty for a long time pursued Johnson. The following (from Boswell) is a striking proof of his extreme indigence when he published the Life of Savage, in 1744. Soon after this publication, which was anonymous, Mr. Walter Harte, dining with Mr. Cave at St. John's Gate, took occasion to speak very handsomely of the work. Cave told Harte, when they met, that he had made a man very happy the other day at his house by the encomiums he bestowed on the author of Savage's Life. "How could that be?" says Harte, "none were present but you and I." Cave replied, "You might observe I sent a plate of vietuals behind the screen. There skulked the biographer, one Johnson, whose dress was so shabby that he durst not make his appearance. He overheard our conversation; and your applauding his performance delighted him exceedingly."

The inimitable David Garrick became a frequenter of the Gate through the intimacy of Johnson with him. We are informed by Hawkins, that "Cave had no great relish for mirth, but he could bear it; and having been told by Johnson that his friend had talents for the theatre, and was come to London with a view to the profession of an actor, expressed a wish to see him in some comic character. Garrick readily complied, and, as Cave himself

told me, with a little preparation of the room over the great arch of St. John's Gate, and with the assistance of a few journeymen printers, who were called together for the purpose of reading the other parts, represented, with all the graces of comic humour, the principal character in Fielding's farce of the 'Mock Doctor.' "

The simple and loveable Goldsmith, Lauder, the unprincipled detractor of the sublime Milton, and many members of both Houses of Parliament, continually met at the old Gate; and its literary fame may be said to have rivalled its chivalric.

Immediately subsequent to Cave's death, the house became a tavern¹. To follow the varied circumstances of such a metamorphosis would not be interesting to our readers. Suffice it to say, the house has been several times subject to a change of proprietors; most of them attaching as much value to it as the receipts per month would justify. The old Hall has rung with the jocund laugh and joyous song; ponderous humidity, in the shape of stout and porter, has been imbibed; libations of the vinous juice have been more aristocratically disposed of; societies have gathered within its ancient walls; the stanch and right valiant members of the ancient Lumber Troop, with all the

"Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war,"

¹ I have not been able to ascertain the exact time at which the house became a tavern, although taking a deal of trouble for that purpose. Northouck in his "History of London," published in 1773, states that "the arch had been long encumbered with a billiard-room, which filled all the upper part from the spring of the arch; but this has lately been cleared away, and the arch being repaired is now restored to its original dimensions." Doubtless the billiard-room was in connexion with the tavern.

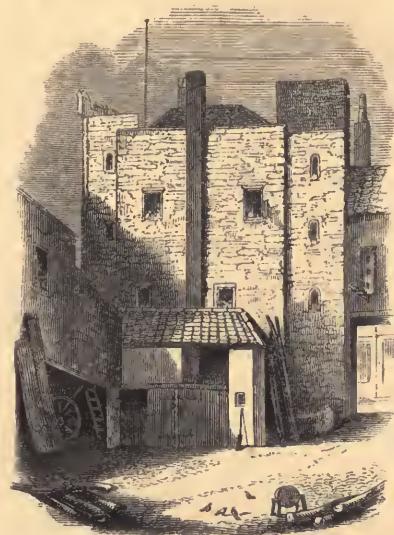
have visited the modern mock-heroic Knights of St. John², whose love of glory was only exceeded by their love of grog, and whose hope of deathless fame was neutralized by the desire to dine together quarterly. Philanthropy has also formed a Brotherhood here; and although no Holy Land now calls for a crusade against the infidel, yet have they formed a crusade against

“Poverty, hunger, and dirt!”

penetrating into the abodes of misery and wretchedness, and by a timely pecuniary assistance frequently rescuing even from the jaws of death many of their fellow-creatures. The inclemencies of the winter season are likewise much softened by the distribution of bread and coals. Since their commencement they have expended some thousands of pounds for such laudable purposes. Their meetings are held every Tuesday evening; and an augmentation of their members would increase their sphere of usefulness³.

² This society at one time was very strong in numbers, and highly respectable. It was mock-heroic in its character, convivial and harmonic in practice; and there was perhaps some degree of poetry in its origin. It was founded in 1826 by Wm. Humphries, Esq., in conjunction with Mr. Hoar (then proprietor), — Cureton, Esq., the zealous antiquarian and numismatist, Theodosius Purland, Esq., and other gentlemen, who by their talent, genius, and social manners, brought it into great popularity. The society has outlived its poetic attractions, and by degrees seems quietly to have dropt into its grave.

³ Recently the west side of the Gate was used as a Dispensing Hospital; it was restored by the Sovereign Order, which is composed of foreign and English noblemen. Indigent patients were relieved there twice a week. The charity was so beneficent and extensive in its character, that in the first year of its establishment two thousand and sixty-two poor persons experienced its benefits. It is to be regretted that such a benevolent institution did not



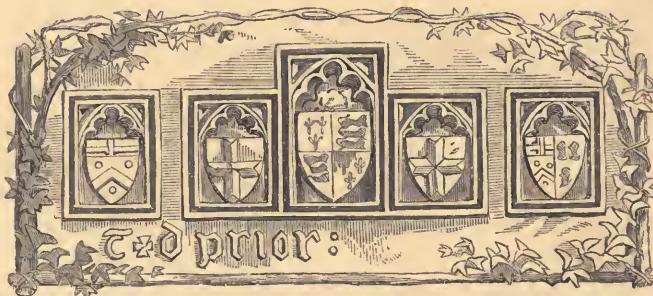
West side of St. John's Gate.

On the 1st of January, 1845, the new Metropolitan Buildings Act came into operation; and in accordance with clause 40, (which requires that the District Surveyor shall apply forthwith to the Official Referees, to authorize a survey to be made of all buildings within the limits of the Act, which through neglect or other causes are in so ruinous a condition that passengers are endangered thereby,) a survey was made, and a notice given to the then owner of St. John's Gate to repair it. The decomposition of the stone casing to the several sides of the building

meet with that support from the neighbourhood it so much deserved, which had it received, its usefulness might still have been seen, felt, and appreciated in so poor and populous a locality as Clerkenwell.

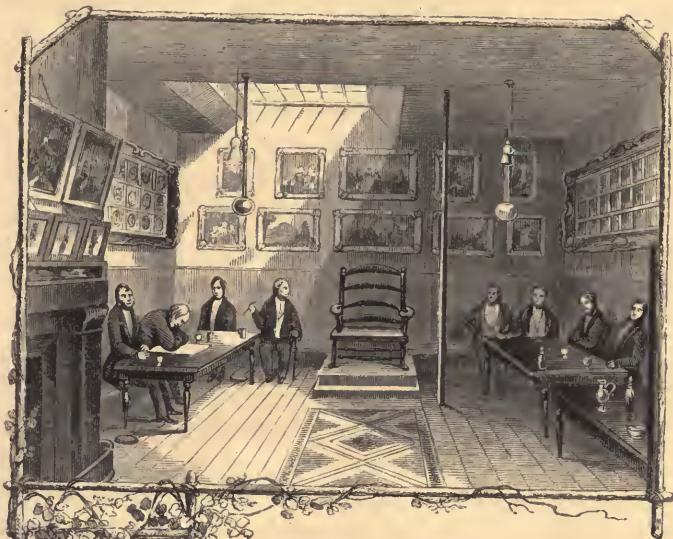
had rendered it dangerous to passers-by; and it appeared that the substantial repairs alone were of so expensive a character, as to prevent the occupant from devoting any attention to a careful reparation of the exterior:—in fact, (who would believe it?) the covering of the Gate with *compo* was suggested. The knowledge of the facts was laid before the Freemasons of the Church, a society for the recovery, maintenance, and furtherance of the true principles and practice of architecture, when a Committee was immediately appointed to prevent the spoliation of the building by cement, and to adopt measures for its careful reparation. Such Committee immediately turned their serious attention to the matter: and through the instrumentality of W. P. Griffith, Esq., who first directed public notice to the subject, the building was saved from the desecration threatened. An address from the Committee to the “nobility, gentry, and all who feel an interest in preserving the arts and monuments of the middle ages,” was issued in March, 1845; and although not responded to in that liberal spirit that might have been anticipated from the higher classes, yet such an interest was exhibited by the inhabitants of the locality, that they rushed to the rescue, and a considerable sum of money was collected for the restoration. A design showing the restoration of the Gate was presented to the subscribers, a list of whom was also printed, with a balance-sheet, giving a detailed statement of all expenses to that date incurred. The Committee, in issuing that statement in April, 1847, while congratulating the public upon their achievements,—“viz. in saving St. John’s Gate from being disfigured by ‘compo,’ in inducing the owners to preserve and repair the old stone-work, and in nearly restoring the north, and partly the south, front,”—they the Committee felt convinced that the

public would not permit the restoration to stop there, but would come forward and assist in finally completing the work in hand. Although a good deal was done towards the restoration, much remained to be done to realize the important and necessary repairs contemplated by the Committee in 1845, as set forth in their original prospectus. The further subscription will be devoted to the reparation of the decorative portions of the Gate. The sum of £165 5s. 6d., subscribed by the public, have already been expended in furtherance of the restoration; and subscriptions are still received by W. P. Griffith, Esq., St. John's Square, who, irrespective of his invaluable assistance as Honorary Secretary to the Committee, has gratuitously given his professional service in surveying and personally superintending the repairs in connexion with restoration. Subscriptions are also received by the Author, who is the present occupant of the Gate; and however small the contribution may be, it would be respectfully received and duly accounted for.



The Arms of France and England on the South Front.

Chapter V.



HAVING run through the different associations with, and circumstances attending the old Gate and Priory, we now bring this little work to a close with a slight description of those remains which time and modern improvement have yet left. The Gateway possesses a beautiful specimen of groining of the fifteenth century, adorned with sculptured bosses and moulded ribs springing from angular columns with moulded capitals. The bosses are ornamented with shields bearing the arms of the Priory and Prior Docwra, and upon the central boss or

keystone is the paschal lamb. The south front, which has a double projection, and is that by which the Hospital was approached from the city, must have been most imposing. There are numerous small windows in the centre and towers: there is a principal one over the crown of the arch in each front, in the wide and obtusely pointed style. The south, or principal front, has the arms of France and England (page 70), and the north front those of St. John's Priory and Sir Thomas Docwra (page 44). Under the Gateway, on the east side, is a modern painting in oil, occupying the entire width of the arch, and containing twenty-four square yards of canvas, the subject "Knights about the time of Edward the Fourth leaving the Hospital for a grand Jousting" (page 75). It has been placed there by the present proprietor. In the west side of the Gateway is to be seen a splendid specimen of ancient carving in oak, formerly the head of a doorway, discovered in 1813, when that part of the building was converted into a watch-house for St. John's parish. This has been laudably preserved, and is now as perfect as when fresh from the hand of the artisan. It has been wainscotted over, leaving an aperture through which it may be inspected. This part of the building is now a coal-shed. Similar shields are likewise observable in the spandrels of a low door-case, forming an entrance to the west tower from the north side of the Gate. The same spandrels are occupied by other figures, of which our cut is illustrative, and which the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1788 says are intended to represent "a cock and hawk" and a "hen and lion" (page 22). This entrance conducts to the top of the turrets, and was the entrance to Cave's printing-office. It is evident the soil must have accumulated much since the building was constructed, as in entering the Gateway from the south, on

the left is the fixed iron shaft of one of the top hinges on which the Gate swung, and is about even with the elbow of a person of ordinary stature : the original pavement was more than three feet below the present level. Some few years ago, the original solid oak stairs were removed from the base of the west tower, and a staircase of a more modern character constructed about two-thirds of the height ; the remaining third still retains the original solid oak referred to, and is now, I should think, the most ancient portion of the internal fittings of the Gate. The east basement is the bar of the tavern : an iron column supports an angle of the building, the lower portion having been cut away to effect an entrance to the bar, which is capacious, and the ceiling of which is beautifully moulded, as indeed are several other rooms in the Gate. The stairs in this part of the house are of the Elizabethan time. The principal room over the arch, called the Hall, has been entirely despoiled of its architectural beauty : common square wooden window-frames are substituted for stone mullions ; a modern flat ceiling supplies the place of a groined roof ; and the walls are defaced by an anti-gothic paper. It is the intention of the present occupant, with the consent and assistance of the proprietors, to restore it to somewhat of its original appearance, as indicated in our engraving of “*y^e Hall*” (page 35). In the Hall are several warlike weapons, some ancient ; there are also two figures in armour, one said to represent Sir Thomas Docwra, the other, Sir William Weston. A handsome bust of Mr. William Till¹, on an elaborate

¹ This gentleman, who is since dead, was the celebrated Medallist of Great Russell Street, Covent Garden. He was much respected by all who had the honour of his acquaintance. He was one of the principal members of the Society of the Knights of St. John already alluded to, and rendered them

bracket, adorns the mantel. The view from the top of the turret is somewhat extensive, and gives a tolerably good idea of the extent of London.

We again come to the base of the building. The room now used as a parlour (page 71), and supposed to have been the one occupied by Dr. Johnson, is not properly part of the Gate, but a portion of an attached house on the north side of the Gate, and has no pretension to any other character than that of a comfortable, old-fashioned room. In it is still retained the old chair (page 64) said to be Dr. Johnson's. There are likewise several very interesting prints, more or less connected with the house and its associations. There is an autograph letter of Sir Thomas Docwra framed: also a series of heads, fifty-four in number, of the Grand Masters of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John. The cellars are roomy and uncouth, the communication with the modern cellarage under the attached house being effected by actually cutting through a wall (the face of the Gate) ten feet seven inches thick. The thickness of the upper walls is nearly four feet: they are not, as might be imagined, of solid stone, but of hard red brick,

essential service, publishing and dedicating to them a similar work to this, and also presenting to them the Arms of the Priory and those of Sir Thomas Docwra cast in bronze, which bronze had been Greek and Roman coins of from two to three hundred years before the birth of Christ; such castings are now in the mantels of the hall and parlour of the house. The Society, in testimony of his worth, placed his bust within the hall, with the following inscription:—“This bust of Mr. William Till was by the unanimous vote of the Chapter of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem placed in this Hall as a mark of their esteem and high respect for the attachment he has invariably shown to, and the services he has rendered the Society. 3rd March, 1836.”

with a stone casing of about nine or ten inches deep. The Gate covers a considerable portion of ground, and must, in its palmy days have been very imposing in appearance. The view we give of the west end (page 68), taken from the premises now occupied by Mr. Davison, while it exhibits the magnitude of the building, likewise shows the neutralizing effect of the smaller edifices attached to it. There have been numerous discoveries made during the last twenty years, through excavating for drains, foundations for new houses, &c. Among these may be cited the original pavement below the Gate, already referred to; the Priory Walls, viz., on the south side and on the west and north sides, may still be traced. A very interesting relic the writer discovered in a vault attached to the Gate. It is the



Interior View of the Arch, showing the Groining.

fragment of a chimney-mantel: the stone is Ryegate firestone, and it has been subject to the action of fire, most likely at the fire in 1381 (page 8).

In the year 1780 the north postern-gate of the Priory in Jerusalem Passage was removed; and since its demolition several discoveries have taken place, showing the boundary-walls to have run between the houses now standing in the Square, and those on the north side of Aylesbury Street and Clerkenwell Green. The remaining matter of interest is that portion of the old Priory still extant in the church which was grafted upon the chancel and side-aisles of the ancient edifice,—and beneath which may be seen the crypt (p. 39) in an excellent state of preservation; the capitals of the columns, ribbed mouldings, lancet-windows, small and deeply splayed, are bold specimens of the period: suspended from the key-stone of each arch is an iron ring, formerly intended for a lamp. On the south side is a small chapel worthy of notice. The Crypt and Church may be viewed, by applying to the Parish-clerk. This Crypt is also remarkable as being the scene of the imposture upon the public known as the “Cock Lane Ghost,” which imposition is fully described in most publications of that day, who mention Dr. Johnson as among the number deceived, and also as one of the first to discover and expose the affair. In 1845 the Church was altered and repaired under the direction of W. P. Griffith, Esq., who discovered, upon removing some of the pews, that they stood upon fragments of the ancient Priory. Beneath the pews are capitals of the clustered columns, with long-flowing palm-leaves: these, as well as portions of the groining, and the bases of the columns, were gilt (gold upon blue): the upper member was hori-

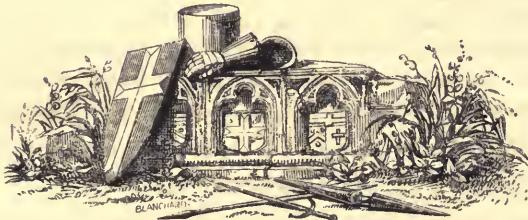
zontally fluted like the Athenian bases. In 1849 an excavation was made in front of the Church, and the Crypt was found to have extended much further westward. A further proof of the extent of the Priory Church is visible in Jerusalem Court, where are several remains of the south-side chapels, with the original buttresses projecting from the houses now occupying the site. These dwellings are one hundred and fifty years old. The Church, with its modern adaptations, has a very warm and comfortable appearance. There are several monumental tablets, some of an artistic character. The turret-clock now in use originally belonged to old St. James's Church. The head of the beadle's staff also belonged to that establishment, and was used in James the Second's time: it has the following inscription—"Ann^o Dom. 1685. Ann^o of Regni Regis Iacobi." It is silver-headed; and a further inscription informs us it was made at "y^e charge of y^e inhabitants of y^e east liberty of St. John of Jerusalem." The portable baptismal bowl (p. 53) is likewise of an antique character, and formerly supplied the place of the font now in use: it has a Scriptural quotation round its rim, with the name of the parish, and the following in Latin—"Deo et Sacris."

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many noble families of distinction resided in the vicinity of St. John's. Bishop Burnet's residence is still to be seen, forming now an entrance to Ledbury Place, St. John's Square; it adjoins a house occupied by the late Dr. Adam Clarke.

In conclusion, we cannot but think the reflective mind must be struck with the many changes to which this very interesting

locality has been subjected during the last eight hundred years; from the dark era when our rude ancestors recognized in the prowess of the sword alone the principle of right, to the present happy period, when clime, caste, complexion, and degree are scarcely known but in their physical developments. And, as the long past has subserved but for the present, so may the present, with its high intellect, art, and science, carve out for itself and posterity a destiny that humanity may rejoice in. Thus regarding the past for its many useful teachings, and with hopeful anticipations for the future, may we chorus—

“ O hallow'd memories of the past !
Ye legends old and fair !
Still be your light upon us cast,
Your music on the air.
In vain shall man deny,
Or bid your mission cease,
While stars yet prophesy
Of love and hope and peace.”



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